

# **Government Publications for the Citizen**

**A REPORT OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY INQUIRY OF  
THE SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL**



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# Government Publications for the Citizen



By James L. McCamy

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF JULIA B. McCAMY

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# THE PUBLIC LIBRARY INQUIRY



THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION proposed to the Social Science Research Council, in 1946, that the Council "conduct a thorough and comprehensive study of the American free public library." The proposal further defined the nature of the study as "an appraisal in sociological, cultural and human terms . . . of the extent to which the libraries are achieving their objectives" and of the library's "potential and actual contribution to American society."

The Council approved the project and submitted to the Carnegie Corporation a proposal for a two-and-a-quarter-year study, to terminate in a general, final report in June, 1949. The inquiry was designed to use, insofar as possible in the study of the public library, such techniques and experience as social scientists have accumulated for the analysis of other social institutions. The Carnegie Corporation appropriated a total of \$200,000 for support of the study.

The Council selected a director to be responsible for the conduct of the Inquiry and for the preparation of a final, general report, and to serve as editor of such reports on special aspects of the study as he recommends for separate publication.

A committee was appointed for the Inquiry to serve in an advisory, deliberative, and consultative capacity, under the chairmanship of the director. The Committee has reviewed and criticized the general report and the other Inquiry reports recommended for publication. The interpretations, judgments, and conclusions contained in them, however, are made solely on the authors' responsibility.



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## FOREWORD



THE PUBLIC LIBRARY cannot be viewed most usefully in isolation from the other social institutions and activities with which it is organically related. The Public Library Inquiry, therefore, seeking to define the library's appropriate function in America, has examined not only the library's central structure and operations but also the enterprises which touch its outer edges. In this perspective the Inquiry hopes to achieve a maximum of objectivity in assessing the public library's role.

The following report on government publications, by James L. McCamy assisted by Julia B. McCamy, is such a peripheral study. It is one of several similar analyses made for the Inquiry, dealing with commercial book publication, magazines, information films, and music materials, respectively.

Mr. McCamy centers his attention on the publications themselves, their purposes, their content, and their actual function, as a means of communication between the government and its citizens. His study follows government information as it is gathered and put into print by the various agencies, enters the government's system of publication and distribution, and finally reaches the individual citizen reader. In the course of his analysis the public library appears with its long rows of government documents in its stacks, but it takes its place as one of the elements in the whole machinery of document distribution rather than as the center or starting point from which the analysis proceeds.

The author rests his assumptions on the basic premises of the Public Library Inquiry: that a democratic society will provide for its members the opportunity to learn; that this includes the provision of means for personal development and satisfactions, for occupational knowledge and skills, and for civic enlighten-

ment; and that with regard to civic enlightenment democracy has a primary obligation, because such enlightenment is a necessary basis for transaction of the business of a democracy, even for its survival.

On this foundation the author builds the four assumptions underlying his particular study: (1) that modern government at all levels is a reliable, impartial source of authoritative technical, scientific, and other information of great value to individuals and groups and should be made as widely accessible to citizens as possible; (2) that in public discussion pertaining to governmental policies and programs, whether in the field of education, public health, social security, conservation of resources, taxation, foreign affairs, or other areas in which government experts are engaged in carrying out policy, the offices and agents of government have important social information and valuable points of view to contribute to public debate; that they have the right and duty to make their case openly in direct competition with the views of others; providing always that government in its attempts to persuade does not monopolize or discriminate against competitors in argument through the channels of public communication; (3) that public libraries as part of the whole system of communication have the special function of making easily available to all citizens the more serious, more reliable and more permanent materials of all kinds; (4) that public libraries as agencies of government supported by taxation have a natural and strategic role to play in the conservation and distribution of information which aids communication between the government and the citizen.

The author's examination of the purposes, scope, and present machinery for publication and distribution of government information, in the light of his assumptions, leads him to the conclusion that the purposes are too narrow and that there is serious inadequacy and waste in actual operation. He proposes consideration of a comprehensive program to develop a system

of distributing government publications in which the public library would play a leading part.

It is an ambitious program. But its elements are not new. They come from reports of committees of librarians and from statements, public and private, of government officials concerned with the publication and distribution processes. They come also from the author's extensive research and experience in the subject. *Government Publicity; Its Practice in Federal Administration* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1939), written by Mr. McCamy, is one of the most comprehensive analyses of the organization of the federal government for the distribution of information and of advocacy. During the years 1939-46, Mr. McCamy was associated with the Departments of Agriculture and Commerce in Washington, D.C., and with various government war agencies. In these posts he learned to appreciate the valuable stores of reliable information existing in our administrative agencies and to recognize some of the difficulties in getting this information through the machinery of government and into the hands of the people in usable form.

To bring about the changes the author proposes will require co-operative effort on the part of government publication agencies, of legislative bodies, and of public, university, and research libraries.

ROBERT D. LEIGH

New York  
June, 1949



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# Government Publications for the Citizen



# I

## THE CHARACTER OF GOVERNMENT PUBLICATION

GOVERNMENT is a great source of reliable information and significant discussion for citizens. To make knowledge available and policies known, the agencies of government have become prolific sources of pamphlets and books. Our Federal Government is the most productive. States and municipalities within this country and international organizations, which are not governments, but in some degree comparable to governmental agencies, also produce a significant body of official literature. All of them publish reading material on various subjects and of different degrees of interest. Some of it is factual, for example, statistical reports on economic conditions, and is accordingly in itself as nonpolitical as the census reports. Much of it is technical, dealing with a subject in a manner which interests only specialists. Some of it is designed for the average literate citizen, to provide useful general information, perhaps explaining how to make things or perform certain processes, or to secure support, through information, for some program of the government. It may well provide the citizen with the most complete and the most accurate data on these subjects.

Whatever its nature, information is distributed by government to some extent through all the media of communication. Print, pictures, and the spoken word in manifold forms of dissemination are used. We shall, however, be concerned here primarily with the Government's contribution of books and pamphlets to the stream of communication, for these constitute

the medium with which libraries are principally concerned.

And we shall be concerned more with the use of government publications by general readers—citizens who are seeking information and guidance—than with the use of specialized government publications by clients of the reference department in the library. The distinction is not precise and can never be. We think there is a difference, difficult as it is to define, between government publication for the average citizen and government material for reference use by particular readers. It is roughly the difference between pamphlets on our foreign policy or on our physical health and pamphlets on a census of industry or the wind tunnel tests of airplane wings.

**METHODS OF PRODUCTION** There was a time when all publications of the Federal Government were printed. As speed in issuing publications became more important, and also as the funds available for printing diminished in relation to the activities which called for printing, the agencies turned more and more to the "processing" of publications. The major distinction between types of publication is, accordingly, between printed documents and processed documents. This distinction cannot be shown with any significance by counting up the two types, because the number of processed materials as distinct from printed materials would give no clue to their significance in library use. The distinction is mainly one of production methods. Processed publications are produced by mimeograph, multigraph, planograph, rotaprint, multilith—that is, by any duplicating process other than ordinary printing. They may be single sheets or entire books.

Regardless of method of production, shape, or size, a Federal publication may be important and must be considered for its subject and content rather than for its appearance. Particularly for the expression of policy processed material may be valuable, for many public officials give reasons and arguments for

their positions in speeches which never reach the dignity of print. The point is made because processed materials are the most elusive of government publications, and it may be true that some librarians have tended to neglect processed publications because they seem ephemeral. This material also presents filing problems which torment the ingenuity of the most brilliant custodian.

**KINDS OF GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS** Aside from differences in duplicating processes, there are differences in the kinds of documents. From a two-month sample of the titles of Federal publications in the Government Printing Office *Catalog* for January and February, 1947, the number, proportional distribution, and kinds can be shown as follows:

<i>Kind of Publication</i>	<i>Number of Titles</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Publications</i>
Pamphlets	1,371	49.1
Maps	567	20.3
Periodicals	395	14.1
Briefs and Transcripts	150	5.4
Catalogs	148	5.3
Books	101	3.6
Posters	38	1.3
House Organs	16	0.6
Charts	8	0.3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,794</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In this list a pamphlet is defined as any single publication of less than one hundred pages, either bound in paper covers or unbound, processed or printed. The figure for maps does not include the daily weather map, but does include maps of all other types. Periodicals are those publications which appear recurrently under the same title, but with varying content. They may be magazines or statistical statements for cumulative files. The controlling factor is whether the publication is re-

current, in contrast to the pamphlets, which appear only once. Periodicals are listed only twice a year, in the January and the July issues of the *Monthly Catalog* of the Government Printing Office. Briefs and transcripts could be counted as pamphlets or as books, but it was thought to be more revealing to list them separately, because they are a special type of publication. The same is true of catalogues, according to this definition any listings of uninterpreted data, such as directories of personnel or bibliographies. Books are publications bound in hard covers or bound in paper and containing one hundred or more pages. Posters are intended for public display. House organs are publications designed primarily for the employees of an agency. They could be listed in most cases as periodicals, but they have a different significance for library use and so are counted separately here. Charts are graphic presentations of information, but are not intended for public display, as are posters. An organization chart of some Federal agency would be a good example of a chart.

A library interested in handling all the publications of the Federal Government listed in the *Monthly Catalog* is faced with a large problem. If the publications issued by various agencies, but not reported to the Government Printing Office, hence not included in its list, were added, the volume would reach an unpredictable size, since no one knows how many publications appear without the blessing of a catalogue listing. The total output recorded in recent years was 21,440 items in 1946, 22,079 items in 1947, and 25,539 items in 1948.

**READABILITY OF GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS** The style of these government publications, which has traditionally been considered a formidable handicap, is usually appropriate to the subject matter. Many of the books are easy to read, as well as being valuable for their content, and this is a suitable place to refute the cliche that all government publications are

dull, poorly printed, and in general designed to fill the waste spaces of attic storage. There is an unverified, but probably accurate impression among people interested in the publications of our Federal Government that "attractiveness" or "eye appeal" has been increased for a constantly growing number of publications throughout the past twenty years. Certainly some of its documents compare favorably in printing design with those published commercially. The appearance and style of a government publication depend upon the agency which prepares it, and the agency will select its style and format according to the subject and the audience it hopes to reach, and according to the amount of money it can spend. People read the census because they want statistics. There would be little point to adding photographs. For the clear presentation of statistics in tables, however, one would have to look a long time to find a better job than that of the Bureau of the Census. Specialists read research reports from scientific agencies to get the data, and illustrations are added only if they would help the reader to understand the data. On the other hand, the report of a battle is made clearer by the use of maps and photographs, hence the use of illustrations in battle histories is generous.

The style of writing is often a concise prose suited to the purpose of the work, which is usually to explain some process, to relate what happened, or to elucidate the position of the Government on certain issues. *Volturno*, a battle history, is a convenient illustration. It begins:

Before dawn on the morning of 13 October 1943, American and British assault troops of the Fifth Army waded the rain-swollen Volturno River in the face of withering fire from German riflemen and machine gunners dug in along the northern bank. Water-soaked and chilled to the bone, our troops fought their way through enemy machine-gun pits and foxholes to establish a firm bridgehead. This crossing of the Volturno opened the second phase of the Allied campaign in Italy.

One of the important items in current literature is *The International Control of Atomic Energy, Scientific Information Transmitted to the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission, June 14, 1946—October 14, 1946*, issued by the Department of State, through the Government Printing Office. Here, written by scientists who worked on the bomb, is their explanation for laymen of the technical results, including an analysis of its effectiveness in the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is no windy speculation, but a straight factual account, far removed from the typical after-dinner conversation about the bomb.

Within the same volume, because the terms of reference of the Atomic Energy Commission include in addition to atomic weapons "other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction," is a seven-page report on the "Implications of Biological Warfare," written by four leaders in the development of this new weapon during the recent war. The atomic bomb took the attention of the reading public because it was spectacular and because it was actually used, while biological warfare was confined, fortunately, to the laboratories. Any citizen who wants to be informed on the latter menace, however, can read these seven pages without a glossary. The section begins:

Biological warfare may be defined as the use of bacteria, fungi, viruses, rickettsias, and toxic agents derived from living organisms (as distinguished from synthetic chemicals used as gases or poisons) to produce death or disease in men, animals, or plants. It may be directed against military or naval forces, civilian populations, livestock or crops. Employed against personnel, it may cause fatalities, or only incapacitate; the duration of illness may be brief or protracted; the causative agents used may be persistent or non-persistent; they may spread readily from infected to healthy persons, or they may be of a type which produces non-contagious disease.

Then the report relates the plan for development and summarizes the accomplishments of the work in this subject. The seven accomplishments were:

1. The development of methods and facilities for the mass production of pathogenic microorganisms and their products.
2. The selection and cultivation of highly virulent varieties of pathogenic microorganisms.
3. Development of methods for the rapid and accurate detection of minute quantities of disease-producing agents.
4. Significant contributions to knowledge of the properties and behavior of air-borne, disease-producing agents.
5. Important advances in the treatment of certain infectious diseases of men and animals.
6. Extensive studies on the production and control of diseases which might affect crops of economic importance.
7. Information was obtained on the effects of more than 1,000 different chemical agents on living plants.

And tucked away on the last page of this remarkably condensed forecast of doom is a short paragraph on the seventh accomplishment.

Information was also obtained regarding the effect of more than 1,000 different chemical agents on living plants. This is a particularly fertile field and one that promises much to agriculture in the form of weed killers and selective plant control agents.

The work was initiated to find destructive agents against various crops and was successful. Applications of certain of these agents, even in infinitesimal dilution, had shown that they were capable of depriving the enemy of the benefits of his own labor by depriving his garden and field crops of their fruits. *Only the rapid ending of the war prevented field trials in an active theater of synthetic agents which would, without injury to human or animal life, affect the growing crops and make them useless* [italics supplied].

This short report on biological warfare, even considered without reference to the surrounding and dominating techni-

cal information on atomic fission in the same publication, illustrates as well as any publication the points that should be emphasized about much of the government information which is available to the general reader in books and pamphlets. It is authentic and written by the scientists who worked on the subject for the Government. It is important; any well-informed citizen should know about this potentially destructive force. It is easy to read; anyone with a high school education can master the language and the concepts.

#### GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Many readers will be impressed by the difference between what the Government says in an official release and what the newspapers oftentimes select from the release to emphasize. The official publication may well provide the only available source of data on matters of great importance, for example, the record of strategic bombing in Germany and Japan in the Second World War, which is the official report on the effectiveness of a technique of warfare for which we spent billions of dollars. This record shows that old-style strategic bombing was much less effective than we had thought from reading the newspapers. Government publications may provide easy access to the source documents of history, for example, the United States proposals for control of atomic energy, and so make world events more vivid because of having perceived them through the study of authentic original papers. It is a great event in the intellectual history of an individual when he realizes that history is around him every day and not alone a dry recital from the past. Among such publications can be found the official version of some of the great subjects of our time. The major battle campaigns of the war, the development of atomic energy and its control, the results of bombing, our policy toward the defeated nations—all these dramatic narra-

tives and major policies are written up and discussed in the reputedly colorless pages of official publications.

**CATALOGUING OF SUBJECT MATTER** This information, however, is not effectively classified for the use of the reader. It is not divided according to audience—for instance, into technical studies, practical manuals, and explanation of government policy. Such a scheme, though rough, would help the librarian, or any other interested person, to pick out materials which might have some popular interest.

At present the Federal Government, upon which most of this discussion will center, because its output is so preponderant, classifies its publications according to the issuing agency. The titles hold roughly to the subject of the agency's concern, but in this respect, as in most other modern affairs, no hard-and-fast line can be drawn between categories. As a method of organizing knowledge such a division (by issuing agency) is nearly meaningless and largely irrelevant. The librarian and general reader will be more interested in subjects covered by new government publications than in the agency that issues a particular title, for the name of the agency is not an accurate guide to content. Suppose, for instance, that a reader wants to know what is available on child welfare. This may be available from the Children's Bureau or from the Public Health Service; from the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Nutrition and Home Economics or from the division that handles the school lunch program; from the Office of Education or from the Indian Service. Almost any subject may be included among the publications of almost any agency.

LeRoy Charles Merritt, in *The United States Government As Publisher* (University of Chicago Press, 1943) found that in 1939 the "independent establishments published documents about every one of the thirty-two subjects" which he used for the classification of documents listed in the *Monthly Catalog*

of publications of the Federal Government. The "old-line" executive departments (a term used for the departments whose heads are members of the Cabinet as distinguished from agencies such as the Budget Bureau or the National Labor Relations Board) also published documents about all the subjects except one, and the Legislative Branch published documents on thirty of the thirty-two subjects.

**SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION** The most relevant examination of government publications in relation to their interest for public library users outside the reference room will reveal the types of subjects covered. Therefore we have grouped the typical output of the Federal Government and of the states under topics chosen as most likely to coincide with library reading. The official sources are not relevant, for what does the reader care whether his information comes from agency B or agency X? In most cases he does not even know the agencies by name.

Mr. Merritt simplified this task by laboriously discovering that all issues of the *Monthly Catalog* of the Government Printing Office contain about the same distribution of subject matter. Any one issue is representative of the quarter in which it falls and also of the entire year of which it forms a part. We have observed that some difference will be found in the number of topics under various subjects, but the variety of the subjects remains the same. Thus, certain periodicals may be listed only in the January *Monthly Catalog*, although the subjects covered by the unlisted periodicals will no doubt appear in some other publication.

Any selection of headings for a system of categories involves judgment by the cataloguer. One might follow the library system, for example, and find the topics of doubtful relevance to readers, though they would make it much easier to determine the location of the items once they are shelved.

One might adopt Mr. Merritt's classification, as shown in Table I of his book, and have a satisfactory condensed description of government publications according to the general headings which he chose for his purposes. For this study we tried to assume the position of a citizen or of a librarian in a public library who wants to know what Federal publications are about. Then all the titles for the months of January and February, 1947, were examined and grouped under categories. The list is fairly long (see Appendix B), but it is offered in its present detail because it seems that only by a detailed list can we present clearly what publications are typically available in terms of what the average citizen probably wants to know.

The most striking conclusion to be drawn immediately from even a casual glance at this classification is that four fifths (83.2 percent) of all the publications fall into seven major categories. The 2,794 separate publications listed by title in the catalogues (counting periodicals only once) can be assigned as follows.

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of Titles</i>	<i>Percentage of Total</i>
1. Legal actions	512	19.4
2. Economic analysis and reporting	488	18.4
3. Technical analysis and reporting	395	15.0
4. Aviation	337	12.7
5. Bids, specifications, and invitations	239	9.0
6. Management	106	4.0
7. Personnel	104	3.9
Other subjects	465	17.6
Total	2,646	100.0
Catalogues, directories, etc.	148	
Total all publications	2,794	

Under "Legal actions," the largest category, are grouped laws enacted, bills under consideration, administrative regula-

tions, decisions by administrative agencies in that general area familiar to lawyers and political scientists as "administrative law," court decisions and briefs, and transcripts used in cases of litigation or regulation. These items are of limited interest to the general reader.

The second category in size, "Economic analysis and reporting," includes those items which present statistics on economic conditions or through analysis place the statistics into some significant context for the past or the future. This category represents a large part of the work of government, and the figures shown in the list are on the whole what might be expected. The largest single group of subjects within this category deals with agricultural commodities and industries; these items are issued by the Departments of Agriculture and Commerce. Reports of production, exports, sales, and other economic conditions affecting agricultural commodities form a large portion of the Federal output. Their subject matter may run from apples through blueberries, feed, grain, livestock, naval stores, poultry, tobacco, and vegetables to wheat, with other items scattered alphabetically among them to make a total of twenty-four different commodities. Within the category of industries there is as large a variety. Some examples of industries, taken at random to illustrate the point, are aircraft, baking, ceramics, chemicals, foundries, machine tools, refrigeration, and textiles.

For the person who is engaged seriously in producing a commodity or in operating a unit in the industry that is covered by such governmental reporting, these reports have real value. The general reader who is not a specialist in such an industry or commodity will probably live serenely to the end of his days without reading them.

Technical analysis and reporting is the third category and, like economic reporting, it is a reflection of one of the major activities of government. The items in this category are mainly

reports on research and testing in the manifold spheres of our technology. Forty-two titles come from the field of agriculture: studies on such subjects, for example, as bees, blueberries, cotton, fruit, goats, guayule, hogs, rabbits, rice, and vegetables. Technical studies of aircraft account for 153 reports, principally devoted to tests in wind tunnels and tests on materials and detailed features of construction. Research on forest products produced thirty publications; on minerals, forty; in the field of medicine, eighteen; in the field of pests, thirteen. The audience for such publications depends on the subject and the type of research which is reported. Probably no one outside the design laboratories of the aviation industry will want to read a technical report on the relative efficiency of a particular coating for the skin of an airplane, while many a householder and more apartment dwellers might be interested in reports on insect pests. By and large, however, the titles under technical analysis and reporting will appeal only to specialized readers.

The items under "Aviation," the fourth category, include principally aeronautical charts, useful for the pilot who wants to fly somewhere beyond his own airport, but of no value for the groundling who only wants to know about some far-distant place and whether the climate there is as bad as it is at home. Some day, if it has not been done already, some enterprising library will set up a special room for air pilots, student pilots, and devotees of flying and will need a large stock of government charts, regulations, manuals, and the other items which come under the heading "Aviation," but this service would not be of interest to the general reader.

Invitations to bid for government contracts and specifications for the objects of contract, the fifth category, are of interest to a very limited audience of prospective bidders. They are the working papers for doing business with the Government, usually understandable only to those who know the technical terms involved. A general book on methods of doing

business with Government would be another matter. Invitations to bid on particular contracts would scarcely stir typical readers to storm the library.

The category "Management," sixth in size, includes items that would be more likely to be of general interest. Here are to be found whatever the Government publishes on operating a business or a home, subjects which seem from experience and surveys to appeal to many people. Not all the items in the category, however, will be "how-to-do" books. The Government also reports studies and conditions in various fields of management in which only the reader involved in such fields would be interested. For two sample months the publications in this category were in twenty-three separate fields, beginning with airports and ranging through foreign trade, forests, government, home, industry, labor, small business, and wild life, to take a few samples from the list.

Personnel matters, finally, include items such as rules for the civil service, statements concerning government employees, guidance for veterans of the Second World War, and manuals dealing with veterans or other clients of government who claim special attention. Aside from government employees, the largest audience of citizens for this category would be the veterans. Some of these items will be sought by any library.

These are the principal divisions into which government publications fall, as one tries to make their diverse contents available. They make up four-fifths of the Federal publications and are directed chiefly to specialists, having general appeal only in particular cases. What about the remaining publications? The story is much the same, although some of them, especially under the headings "foreign policy," "health," "housing," "insurance," "recreation," "safety," or "World War II," can be considered to have wide general interest. A glance at the list in Appendix B will show the specialized character of the others, that is, army regulations, government

contracts, navigation, patents and trademarks, surplus property, and topography.

The conclusion is obvious. These categories, taken as categories, are not of general interest. They help us understand the general make-up of government publications, but they do not provide much assistance for the common citizen. They would certainly be called for by the users of a reference service in a large library, but they are not in great demand by general readers. The search for publications of general interest is still limited to individual titles among the thousands within these categories.

**SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION FOR STATE DOCUMENTS** The publications of the forty-eight states tend to be on special subjects, hence of interest to specialists to perhaps a greater extent than are even the Federal publications. An analysis of state publications is presented in Appendix C. It shows that the outstanding subject categories for state documents in a one-month sample of the *Monthly Checklist of State Publications*, April, 1948, published by the Library of Congress, were as follows: of a total of 565 titles, annual reports amounted to 15.9 percent; legal actions, 15.2 percent; catalogues, 11.5 percent; economic analysis and reporting, 10.8 percent; and technical analysis and reporting, 10.4 percent.

These five subject fields account for two thirds of all the state publications. Aside from these subjects—and among these subjects too, for that matter—the audience for any particular publication will depend somewhat upon its universality—whether it would be of interest only in the state of its issue or whether it might have readers throughout the nation. This geographical factor tends to limit the audience for state publications more than for Federal publications. Also, the number of titles published by states is much smaller than the number issued by the Federal Government. All the states and terri-

tories whose publications are recorded in the *Monthly Checklist of State Publications* produce together only 40 percent as many titles in a month as does the Federal Government, judging by our estimate of the average monthly production. It should be recognized, however, that the *Monthly Checklist of State Publications* does not include all titles published by the states; in fact no one knows how many publications are issued. The Library of Congress depends on the states to send their publications to it, and the *Checklist* includes the titles of the publications which have been received. Neither are such accessions uniform for the various states, nor is the coverage complete.

**SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION FOR MUNICIPAL DOCUMENTS** Subject categories for municipal publications are even more difficult to set up than are those for the Federal Government and the state governments, because the municipal documents constitute an even more unorganized body of information. The most comprehensive analysis of municipal publications has been made by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Governments Division, whose Municipal Reference Service collects and keeps the documents as sources for part of the data required in the statistical program of that division. The Municipal Reference Service has a file of documents from 397 cities having populations of more than 25,000, but it has not published a comprehensive inventory of the collection.

A *Checklist of Basic Municipal Documents* for the 92 cities with populations of more than 100,000 is now available and can be obtained from the Bureau of the Census. In a letter dated July 6, 1948, Allen D. Manvel, chief of the Governments Division, described the checklist thus:

In addition to the city serial departmental reports, charters, codes of ordinances, and manuals, it includes 181 periodic reports issued by 110 of the governmental units overlying these cities. There are

2,047 report titles shown with data on the frequency of issue and other needed explanatory information. A classified index comprising sixty-eight subjects is contained in the publication.

Earlier, in 1946, the bureau published *City Periodic Financial Reports*, a list of 992 financial titles for 364 of the 397 cities with populations of 25,000 or more.

For cities of more than one hundred thousand population the analysis is contained in Appendix D, which reproduces tables, generously sent for use here, on both the subject matter and the number of publications. The first shows the subjects covered, so that the relative attention given to each subject is clear; and the second shows the number of separate titles listed by each city, as an indication of the volume of municipal reporting, a total of 2,047 for ninety-two cities.

Finance, budgets, charters, ordinances, and education, in that order, are by far the most discussed subjects in municipal documents. Of these ninety-two cities, eighty-nine listed titles on finance, eighty-four on budgets, eighty-three had published charters, seventy-five ordinances, and seventy-four had publications on education. Next in order, but considerably lower, is a group of four subjects, including libraries, in which fifty-seven cities listed titles on fire protection, public health, and public libraries, and fifty-three listed titles on waterworks. The other subjects can be seen in the Appendix. They cover nearly all, if not all, the functions of the modern city.

#### SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

The publications of the one great international publishing "government," the United Nations, including those entities which have headquarters in New York and use the UN Secretariat, are being divided into subject categories to a greater extent than are those within the nation, although much is still to be done. The United Nations classifies its documents, other

than periodicals, the Official Records, and the *Treaty Series*, into these seventeen categories:

- I. General (Handbooks, etc.)
- II. Economic and Financial
- III. Public Health
- IV. Social Welfare
- V. Legal Affairs
- VI. A. Trusteeship  
B. Non-Self-Governing Peoples
- VII. Political Affairs
- VIII. Transport and Communications
- IX. Atomic Energy and Armaments Control
- X. International Administration (international civil service, relations with Specialized Agencies, etc.)
- XI. Narcotic Drugs
- XII. Educational, Scientific and Cultural
- XIII. Demography
- XIV. Human Rights
- XV. Relief and Rehabilitation
- XVI. Fiscal Reports
- XVII. Statistics

This classification system will be helpful, but it does little to indicate what will be interesting to the general reader. Most of the official record would be of little value, in any case, to the majority of public libraries, whose clients want at most to know how the United Nations works and what it has accomplished. These clients would not want to study the nuances of international negotiation. Of all the titles listed in *United Nations Publications*, Catalogue Number I and Supplement Number 1, covering publications issued through August 14, 1947, only 16 of 185 would seem to be useful in a library where high school students would be writing class papers or where citizens would be reading for general information.

The mass of United Nations documents is made up of official records of meetings, rules of procedure, lists of delega-

tions, or reports on special subjects. The sixteen publications of general interest include some reports, such as the report of the headquarters commission and reports on the scientific and technical aspects of the control of atomic energy, non-self-governing territories, financial needs of devastated countries, and the administration of the United Nations. They also include publications that describe the UN, notably *Basic Facts about the United Nations*, a 32-page pamphlet, the annual report of the Secretary General on the work of the organization, and a reprinted edition of the League's study of prosperity and depression by G. Haberler.

The *United Nations Bulletin* is counted as of popular interest, but not the *Journal of the United Nations* (discontinued January 21, 1947), the *Monthly List of Selected Articles*, which is an index of about one thousand periodicals for selected articles on political, economic, financial, and other questions of the day, the *Monthly List of Books Catalogued in the Library of the United Nations*, and the *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*.

In addition to the printed catalogue, *United Nations Publications*, the United Nations regularly prepares special price lists of titles in special fields. Every six to eight weeks it revises a "List of Selected United Nations Documents and Publications." This contains a careful selection of reports and records of current interest. It is distributed not only by the United Nations itself but also by the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, the fifty-odd U.S. Volunteer Educational Centers for the United Nations, and the majority of the U.S. State Department Area Distribution Centers. Of the latest U.S. edition of this list, ten thousand copies were produced and are now in the process of distribution.

A comprehensive index of all publications placed on sale between 1945 and 1948 has recently been published. The responsibility of indexing United Nations documents and

publications lies in the Headquarters Library Services. Its program includes: prompt preparation of manuscript indexes primarily to meet the needs of the Secretariat; definitive printed checklists and indexes by organs and sessions; indexes to resolutions and "disposition of agenda items"; and other occasional indexes and bibliographies. A weekly or monthly checklist and index to cover specialized agencies as well as United Nations documents is under consideration.

It is a different story with the product of the Department of Public Information. This material is prepared for a wide public, usually in the form of unbound mimeographed releases. The most useful of such documents for general readers are the so-called "background papers," which are prepared by the Research Section of the United Nations Library in connection with conferences. In short but authoritative form the releases give the history, terms of reference, agenda, membership, and other pertinent facts about the committees and commissions which are to meet. Some also cover subjects which are considered in the conference. A checklist gives the following examples of such popular releases:

- Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, April 17, 1947
- Meeting of Experts on Telecommunications, May 14, 1947
- Economic Commission for Europe, May 29, 1947
- Economic and Social Council, with chart, July 1, 1947
- The General Assembly, with chart, August 25, 1947
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment, October 30, 1947
- Trusteeship Council, with chart, November 10, 1947
- United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information, January 26, 1948
- Security Council, with chart, January 30, 1948
- Membership in the United Nations, March 12, 1948
- International Control of New Synthetic Drugs, April 13, 1948
- An International Bill of Human Rights, April 15, 1948

These examples are taken from a total of forty-two such papers.

In addition to the forty-two background papers, some smaller categories of popular releases are also available. There are two so-called "Information Papers," one on the charter of the United Nations and the Covenant of the League and one on voting in international organizations. There are four releases in the "Outline Series," which "are intended to give a very brief description of the organization and activities of the various bodies of the United Nations." The four, all of which were issued in early 1948, cover the Atomic Energy Commission, Military Staff Committee, the Commission for Conventional Armaments, and the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East.

There are four "Questions and Answers," one each on the aims and principles of the United Nations, the General Assembly, the Trusteeship Council, and the Security Council. There were two chronologies of the United Nations, one covering January 1, 1942, through April 30, 1947, and a supplement covering May 1, 1947, through December 31, 1947. And there were two miscellaneous releases, one on the aims of the United Nations as expressed in the Preamble to the charter and one on the structure of the United Nations giving the membership and the functions of the various organs.

Add to these popular papers the *United Nations Bulletin*, also prepared by the Department of Public Information, and any titles of general interest from the catalogue of official publications, and the public nonresearch library will have covered the relevant material from the central body of United Nations. The reference library will, of course, be concerned as well with the official documents.

lishing their practices or have not yet begun to publish, so that it is impossible to venture conclusions on the nature of their publications. They will no doubt range from the technical to the popular.

The International Labor Office, as an organization which has existed since the First World War, has issued publications that cover broadly the fields of labor and welfare, including such stand-bys as the monthly *International Labour Review*, the quarterly *Industrial Safety Survey*, the quarterly *Legislative Series*, and the *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*. It has issued catalogues of its publications, and in a sense it may represent for its field the kinds of publication such a projected agency as the International Trade Organization may produce in the future for its field.

The publications of the International Civil Aviation Organization, which had a between-wars predecessor in the International Commission for Air Navigation, will probably be more narrowly technical. They now include operational standards for aircraft, regional manuals, and multi-language glossaries.

The lists of titles now offered by two of the newer agencies, the Food and Agriculture Organization, which was preceded by the International Institute of Agriculture, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, as they were available for sale in the United Nations Bookstore at Lake Success in July, 1948, are given for illustration in Appendix E. They range from economic commodity reporting and a report on technical needs of nations in press, radio, and films to a description of the FAO's work and the newspaper house organ of UNESCO.

For these publications by specialized agencies there is as yet no central catalogue and no index, and the United Nations Library is considering the issuance of a weekly subject index of the publications of the UN and its specialized agencies. At present, however, while libraries may be interested in publica-

tions from any of them at one time or another, they obtain no help from the publishers themselves. It would be simple to arrange for cataloguing and distribution if all these agencies were really united and all shared in co-ordinated administration, but they are not united. In some cases, notably the International Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the specialized agencies have refused to enter with the central United Nations any relationship closer than a polite speaking acquaintance, and in no case has any such intimacy as shared administration been accepted. International agencies seem to be as wary of co-ordination as are the agencies within our own Government. In reality there is no united world organization; there is, instead, a central agency called the United Nations and several independent agencies, each working in its own way on its special programs.

Librarians who must keep up with international publications now, for example, those working in libraries that specialize in international relations, must live a rather tense and energetic life, vigilantly watching for any possible clues to the presence of a desirable publication, then writing to the issuing agency in the hope of getting a copy. They can rely on no system to tell them certainly the exact time of publication of all that is being published, although the bibliographies prepared and issued later by the World Peace Foundation are as thorough a post-publication coverage as possible. These are the quarterly *Documents of International Organizations; A Selected Bibliography*, and the less comprehensive bibliography published in the quarterly journal *International Organization*, distributed also as a reprint by the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Library.

Although suffering from the normal governmental complications of unco-ordinated agencies, the United Nations has shown a real interest in publishing. In this it is following precedent. The League of Nations was one of the great and significant publishers of the world, although its output, like

that of the United States Federal Government, was predominantly more useful as reference material than as reading for the varied library clientele. Its *Bulletin of Statistics* was the recognized medium for the exchange of international statistical information, and many of its other publications were sources of knowledge to guide policy. In the period following the Second World War the international agencies that have succeeded the League may well develop even more variety and volume of publication.

**SUMMARY** The various agencies of government in the United States have become highly important sources of published material, available to the public in a wide variety of forms. Government publications are valuable not only for reference purposes, but also for information useful to the general public, whether it be an explanation of national policy, the official record of some important event, or a manual of instruction.

As these publications, municipal, state, Federal, and international, pour into the stream of communication, there is at present little attempt to channel them by subject category. They can be traced to their sources in various agencies, but this reveals little of their content. Although conscious of the value of publicity, governmental agencies have made almost no systematic attempt to filter their information in publications for general consumption. As a result it is assumed today by the general public and most librarians that government publications are chiefly useful as reference material, a classification which, though crude, is generally accurate. It takes a reader especially interested in a specific subject to dig out the information upon it to be found in government documents. And it takes a reference librarian with special skills to be of much assistance. The emphasis on reference use, unfortunately,

often leads to underemphasis upon the importance of this material as a source of popular information.

The problem which governmental agencies have failed to solve, therefore, is so to organize their growing literature that it can best serve the public which pays for its production. Its value would seem to be obvious, but the method of handling the material tends to obscure that value.

## DISTRIBUTION OF GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

THE PRESENT SYSTEM of distribution of Federal publications has been examined and criticized for years by government committees, by librarians, and by individuals. It has not been found good. Little that is new can be added to their criticisms.

THE DEPOSITORY LIBRARY SYSTEM The present system of depository libraries was established to make documents available to citizens throughout the nation. Yet it limits the number of libraries to one for each Congressional district to be designated by the Member of the House of Representatives; one for each state, from any part of the state, to be designated by each of the Senators from the state; one library in each territory, to be designated by the delegate from the territory; all state libraries; all territorial libraries; and a few libraries which are added from time to time by special legislation. Once designated, a library cannot be removed except by its voluntary request or because of its dissolution.

In the beginning each depository received all the printed material that was distributed. In 1937, for example, this meant about four thousand books and pamphlets a year, requiring nearly one hundred and fifty feet of shelf space, and in any earlier year the space required was considerable. The law provides that publications may not be disposed of except as the Superintendent of Documents, who is an official of the Government Printing Office, shall direct. Since most libraries had

no use for much of the material and could much less cope with the shelving problem it presented, the law was changed to allow libraries to choose what they want by title, a task that is made easier by a checklist provided by the Superintendent of Documents.

The first type of depository library, which still receives everything sent to depositories, is known as an "all-depository," while the second type, which takes what it wants, is a "selective depository." As of July 20, 1948, there were 125 all-depositories and 418 selective depositories. Taken together, the 543 libraries comprise .06 percent of all the libraries in the United States, exclusive of elementary and high school libraries. If we count as public libraries all those whose names do not clearly show them to be college, university, state government, or institutional libraries, we find that of the total of 543 depository libraries only 162 are public libraries. These 162 are only .02 percent of the 7,408 public library systems in the nation in 1945.

**THE SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS AS SUPERVISOR** In government circles there is a suspicion that librarians do not respect their gifts. In some cases, certainly, they fail to make them readily available to the public and to keep them so; in some cases they may actually discard publications in violation of the law, which says they may dispose of documents only as the Superintendent of Documents shall direct. He, as supervisor of the system, is bound to suspect that all is not strictly according to the letter of the law. All that is necessary to arouse his suspicion is a little reflection on the arithmetic of that one hundred and fifty feet of shelf space a year which would be filled by the books and pamphlets sent to "all-depositories" and the small demand from citizens for some of the material. Shelf space is valuable in any library that is well managed. In one decade, at the rate of production in the later

1930s, government documents would fill fifteen hundred feet, and some of them would never be requested by a client.

The lack of funds for travel has meant that the Superintendent of Documents could not inspect depositories to see how the system really works. Although he sold \$3,038,376 worth of documents in the fiscal year 1947, he was limited by Congress, absurd as it may seem, to \$200 for travel expenses. Yet he is enjoined by law to investigate the depository libraries to make sure that, with the exception of college libraries, each has at least one thousand books other than government publications and that each is maintained as a public library. The only recourse he has had is a mail survey, a questionnaire which is answered by the libraries, without any assurance that it is filled out with understanding and accuracy. The survey, even so, indicates that changes need to be considered. Some libraries have been dropped because it was clear that they were not functioning properly as depositories. One additional possible check was being discussed in the summer of 1948, and may provide more insight into the performance of depositories. The Superintendent of Documents and his adviser, Jerome K. Wilcox, chairman of the American Library Association Committee on Public Documents, were negotiating with the U.S. Bureau of the Census to survey, through its field offices, the handling of their publications by depository libraries.

**CRITICISMS OF THE DEPOSITORY SYSTEM** The present depository system does not serve in the mid-twentieth century its original purpose of making government publications widely available throughout the nation. This depository act was adopted in its basic form in 1857, but it was an extension of the idea of making documents available to states and territories and even to colleges and universities, which had been followed in special acts from the early days of the Republic and was

recognized as a permanent policy in a resolution of 1813. All that need be said about the failure of the present system to fulfill its original purpose is that modern means of communication and the modern library system now offer an opportunity of which the government is not taking advantage. Complete collections of government publications are needed only for reference work. But the library system of the nation can be used to disseminate selected information and to mobilize opinion in a way not previously possible.

Pertinent criticisms of the system are that it does not provide for the distribution to libraries of processed as well as printed material; it discriminates against a library that is not on the depository list, and which cannot be included without a resolution of Congress; and it provides no copies of any publications for the branches of a library system, which is where many popular publications will be needed. These are criticisms from librarians, written in answer to an Inquiry questionnaire.

The first criticism is based in part on error in so far as it comes from all-depositories. John H. Thaxter, Documents Expediter in the Library of Congress, points out that his office tries to obtain up to 150 copies of all processed publications for the needs of the all-depository libraries, as well as for the needs of the libraries which subscribe to the Expediting Project. The material is sorted and packed in the Library of Congress, then shipped to the all-depository libraries by the Government Printing Office. The Documents Expediting Project was established by a group of libraries for the purpose of finding and distributing to subscribers the fugitive processed Federal materials that would not be listed in the Government Printing Office *Catalog*. First under the management of Walter B. Greenwood and later under that of Mr. Thaxter, the project has served its subscribers with great quantities of processed material, including many items such as maps and studies which were classified as secret during the war, but

released to the public after the war's end. The Library of Congress provides space and facilities for the project, and the subscribing libraries carry the costs of personnel. Perhaps the most significant fact about the project is its creation in the first place. It represents the recognition by more than a hundred libraries which could afford to pay for the service that they were missing desirable publications which were not being listed in the *Catalog*.

Nevertheless, librarians seem to think that the depository system fails to assure delivery of processed material. As one librarian in a large city put it, "We should like to receive more of the important 'processed' materials without having to order each one individually. Some of the most worthwhile government publications are issued in this form. Too often they are 'out of stock' by the time our order gets in." Another would also like to have some processed publications included specifically as deposit material.

To say the least, the depository system does not automatically solve the documents problem for its members. The mere fact of being an all-depository library does not insure that such a library will receive all the publications it wants. For instance, only 22 percent of the publications counted for this report were sent to all-depositories. The other 78 percent had to be ordered from the catalogue or secured in some other way, as any nondepository library or any citizen would have to order them. The selective depositories must select from the *Classified List of United States Government Publications*, which is the catalogue and checklist of the classes of publications available to depositories. In any case, they will get free of charge only those publications that are on the depository list. Thus, for general items in the government catalogues, the depositories are often in the same position as other libraries. This is attested by one librarian. Besides a more thorough listing of all processed publications, he recommends that the

distribution to depositories be enlarged to include all agency publications not now so distributed. One librarian mentioned:

A few agencies whose publications are difficult to obtain: Legislative Reference Service (of the Library of Congress), Army, Navy, Congress (insofar as Committee prints, special reports, and other material outside of the *Congressional Record*, bills, laws and serial set and its separates are concerned). We should like to see the Superintendent of Documents make an effort to take over the reproduction and distribution of needed publications which would otherwise be made unavailable to libraries due to appropriation cuts. One example: *Supplement to Digest of Public General Bills* and the *Public Affairs Bulletins* of the Legislative Reference Service.

**SELECTION PROBLEMS OF THE LIBRARIAN** The standard tools for selection are the *Monthly Catalog*, priced at \$3 a year, the semi-monthly leaflet *Selected United States Government Publications*, distributed free, and the price lists for various different subjects, also distributed free.

The first will average about 125 pages a month and about 1,500 separate entries in fine type, revealing such detailed information as these two samples picked at random.

United States Government manual, 1947, 2d edition (revised through June 1, 1947). [1947] vi 713 p. il. (Government Information Service.) [This edition includes the Constitution of United States with amendments.] \*Paper. \*Item 974

L. C. card 35-26025 Pr 33.407:947

Transfer of certain lands in Illinois to Secretary of Interior, hearings before subcommittee on conservation of wildlife resources, 80th Congress, 1st session, on H. R. 3043, May 21-June 18, 1947. iii 119 p. map. \*Paper. \*Item 362

L. C. card 47-31863 Y 4 M 53: L 23/2

The items distinguished by asterisks are sent to depository libraries.

A peculiarity about such reading matter is that, condensed as it is, the lines must be read carefully. These listings cannot be skimmed. They must be read carefully if the meaning is to be clear. Even this would not be too formidable to librarians if they could justify the monthly search. It becomes discouraging when they find, perhaps, only one or two desirable items in the fifteen hundred.

The semi-monthly list of *Selected Publications* is easier to use, because it presents only some twenty titles in each leaflet and it is printed in larger type. Its chief inadequacy results from the fact that the basis for the selection of items to be listed in this short form is not clear. Hence a librarian is never sure that some items of vital interest may not have been omitted from the list. The Superintendent of Documents chooses for the selected list those titles he thinks will have general interest. Under the heading "Publications Still Available," in some issues of the list, he enters titles that are not moving, but by far the most space is devoted to new titles.

The titles offered in *Selected Publications* indicate somewhat the same variety of subject and about the same range of appeal to general readers as do the titles in the larger catalogue. They may treat of the industrial uses of certain timber species (limited appeal) or home loans under the G.I. Bill of Rights (general appeal); they may be Customs Court reports or an explanation of American policy in occupied areas; uniform accounts for electric railways or excerpts from the speeches and writings of Lincoln; a report on the habits, food, and economic status of the band-tailed pigeon or a collection of papers on aid to Greece and Turkey; a report on education in Ecuador or the handbook on first aid at sea for ships which have no physicians.

While there is an uneasy feeling that items of interest may have been omitted from the selection, the variety of offerings is considerable and *Selected Publications* is a great help to busy people. It offers a short cut to the procurement of the

items which are listed and might be of interest to a library's general clientele. The leaflet includes an order form for those who decide to buy, so that ordering is simplified to some degree.

The Superintendent of Documents also draws special attention to certain publications, either in a featured space in *Selected Publications* or in a separate leaflet with a special order form. This service helps prospective readers and indicates as well the desirability of selecting for various kinds of audiences. During the past year, for example, special notice has been drawn to *An Album of American Battle Art, 1755-1918*, a collection of pictures; the series of accounts of various battles, such as Bizerte, Guam, the Admiralties, Volturno, Omaha Beachhead, and St.-Lo; the 37-volume set of the trial proceedings of the International Military Tribunal trial of the major war criminals at Nuremberg; a periodical called the *Industrial Hygiene Newsletter*; a Navy book on firefighting; *A Medical Survey of the Bituminous Coal Industry*; the yearbook of agriculture, *Science in Farming* (free if requested from a Congressman, a fact which is not mentioned in the leaflet); *Documents Illustrative of the Formation of the Union*; and *Facts of Flight*.

The price lists for various different subjects include items available at the time the list is published. In early 1948 lists were available for forty-two subject fields. This type of list is useful to show what was available at a certain date, but it does not reveal new publications as they appear. It is chiefly a handy reference tool, which might possibly suffice when an item in one of the subjects is desired from stock.

If the library is interested in an old publication, from earlier years, another world is entered. It is a world of monumental indexes, which in the past, since they were designed for posterity, appeared in the leisurely tempo that is appropriate to eternity. All titles which appeared during the two-year session

of a Congress were collected into the *Document Catalog*, each copy of which weighed enough to be a heavy burden. The larger libraries have these volumes in stock for reference use. The last one to be published, that for 1938-40, appeared six years after the publication of the earliest items listed and four years after the first appearance of the latest. The *Document Catalog* is apparently now discontinued. The source for listings of past publications is now the index of each issue of the *Monthly Catalog*, plus a small number of *Supplements*, which list items that have appeared since January, 1941, but did not get listed in the *Monthly Catalog* at the time they appeared. The whole method of listing and indexing has bothered librarians, as might have been expected, but the technical aspects are not for laymen to discuss.<sup>1</sup> We may say only that it seems to us that the problem here, as it is concerning practically all the uses of catalogues and most of the publications under the present system, is mainly one for reference libraries. There is very little attention and almost no emphasis given to the accessibility of Federal publications to the library which does not deal with reference clients of the sort who might want the extensive resources of all Federal documents.

As we have reported earlier, no catalogue lists all the processed publications. The agencies are expected to report all their items to the Printing Office for listing in the *Catalog*, but they do not do so. Some libraries have attempted to meet their needs by subscribing to the Documents Expediting Project,

<sup>1</sup>The Printing Office invited Jerome K. Wilcox, chairman of the Public Documents Committee of the American Library Association, to make a study of the cataloguing and indexing functions of the Division of Public Documents. His report to the Public Printer is published in the *Monthly Catalog* for September, 1947. In an introductory note Fred W. Cromwell, Superintendent of Documents says, "Mr. Wilcox has compiled many checklists and guides to Federal and State publications, and has closely followed the activities of the Division of Public Documents for many years. He has written a number of articles for Library journals criticizing various features of the programs and many of the most constructive changes made in recent years have resulted from his suggestions."

which has discovered and sent to its subscribers tons of valuable government material that otherwise would never have found its way to any library. Its present function is to collect and ship batches of fugitive material to subscribers. It is not selective in a way that would be of use to the general reader or librarian, and there is no adequate agency for the ordinary public library. For them the fugitive processed writings, which are often uncatalogued, although sometimes of great value, cannot be discovered except by writing to the issuing agencies, a procedure which is cumbersome and expensive.

**ORDERING GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS** If the librarian can find the titles he wants, he must then go through another cumbersome procedure in order to procure them. In the first place there is no one center of distribution. He first must ascertain how the publication is distributed and if by an agency, which agency. This information is given for each item listed in the *Monthly Catalog*. About three fourths (74.3 percent) of the publications listed in the *Monthly Catalog* and available for distribution are distributed by the issuing agencies, not by the Superintendent of Documents.

The method of distribution was checked for this report for the 2,794 separate titles published during the two-month sample period. The breakdown follows:

	<i>Number of Titles</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Distributed by Government Printing Office	568	25.7
Distributed by issuing agency	1,639	74.3
Total available to public	<hr/> 2,207	<hr/> 100.0
For official use; not available for distribution	587	
Grand total	2,794	
Sent to depository libraries	616	
Of regional interest	505	

Note that in reality only the first two classes are available for distribution, since the documents for official use cannot ordinarily be obtained. The 1,639 available from the issuing agencies should be compared with the 568 available from the Printing Office, not with the total of all publications for which this particular analysis was made. It is by this comparison that we get the result that about three fourths of the publications which were available for distribution were to be procured from the issuing agency, not from the Printing Office.

The chance is great, therefore, that the librarian will turn to the issuing agency to request the publication, which may or may not be free. If there is no price, he writes the agency. If there is a price, he may write either to the agency, pleading special privilege as a library, or to a member of Congress, who will in all probability refer the request to the agency. The agency may charge the correspondent for it or refer him to the Superintendent of Documents, if the request came from Congress, but the chances are good that it will not charge, because Congressional letters carry special weight in executive agencies even when they are only relaying requests from constituents. Executive agencies want the Congressman to think his constituents are being well served. Frequently a letter from the executive agency is sent to the Congressman to be relayed to his constituent, and frequently the Congressman's secretary writes over the Congressman's signature a letter to the constituent pointing out that the Congressman was happy to perform the service. Any librarian does well to establish cordial relations with the office staff of a member of Congress, as well as with the Congressman himself.

If the item desired is one usually sold for a price by the Superintendent of Documents, the wise librarian will still write to the issuing agency or his Congressman to see if a free copy can be obtained. With few exceptions the issuing agencies decide, within the limits of their own appropriations,

how many copies of a publication will be issued free. Their tendency is to be generous in filling requests unless the item is a standard one which produces revenue or printing appropriations are hard-pressed. Members of Congress, by standing order written into law, receive some departmental publications for free distribution through their own facilities in the House and the Senate and are willing to distribute them until their quota is exhausted. Even if the quota, by chance, is exhausted, a Congressman can relay his request to the agency with some hope that it will be filled without charge. And members of Congress have access, of course, to Congressional publications until the supply is exhausted.

As a last resort the librarian may decide to purchase the publication. He may send a check, or cash if he wants to risk it, or he may send five-cent coupons, which can be purchased in any amount from the Government Printing Office. For some reason these coupons are rather large, and they are cumbersome in comparison to postage stamps or coins. Also, he may send a money order, but the amount charged for the order may well exceed the amount to be spent for the publication. Or he may deposit with the Superintendent of Documents \$5 or more, against which a charge will be made for each publication ordered.

No postage stamps will be accepted, although the purchaser must put postage on the envelope enclosing his order, despite the fact that most other government business is conducted in franked envelopes, including return mail to government agencies. An envelope must be addressed to enclose the order. Other mail-order establishments have worked out reply post-cards or envelopes which are self-addressed, some of them carrying the postal charge, but not the Government. Its order form requires that an envelope be addressed and stamped by the customer. If the catalogue number is clear and the order easy to fill, not requiring search for items not current, the

publication will probably be delivered in about ten days. This is longer than the time required by the big mail-order houses to fill orders from their heterogeneous stocks, but it is fast by comparison with the answering of mail in many other government agencies and is fairly expeditious by any standard.

The questionnaire sent to the libraries in the Inquiry sample<sup>2</sup> indicates how well established this routine of acquisition is. Almost half the forty-seven libraries in this sample were depositories and so acquired some publications as such, and about half also acquired Federal or state publications also by writing to members of Congress or the state legislatures. Twenty-five wrote directly to agencies of government for various items, and twenty-eight purchased some publications. Except for the status of depository, which was held only by libraries in cities of 25,000 and above, the size of the community seems to have had no bearing on the manner in which libraries obtain government publications. The typical library of any size obtains publications by all the ways open to it; by requesting members of the Legislature to send them, by writing directly to individual agencies of the Government, and by purchase.

**IRRATIONAL SALES POLICY** The present system of distribution is based on the theory that citizens should pay for Federal publications at a price which would cover cost of production plus 50 percent; yet in 1940, until then the best year for sales since 1900, Merritt found that only 14.54 percent of the copies published were sold, the sales compensating for only 5.58 percent of the total cost of printing and binding in that year. Our own similar calculation for three later years, for which figures are available in the *Annual Report of the Public Printer*, 1947, shows that sales provided 2.82 percent of total costs of printing and binding in 1945, 4.57 percent in 1946,

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix A.

and 5.73 percent in 1947. One should bear in mind, however, that such a comparison of sales with total costs of printing includes costs for blank forms, postcards, letterheads, envelopes, and the other forms of printing that cannot be called publications. The comparison shows, however, that sales have held about the same proportion to total cost since 1940, except for a drop in the war years, if 1945 is typical.<sup>8</sup>

As a matter of fact, when the cost of producing publications only is isolated from the cost of all printing in the fiscal year 1947, we find that sales compensated for 14 percent of the cost of producing publications. This is about the same percentage as copies sold to copies produced.

Despite the fact that government documents are theoretically for sale, most of them are given away. Only the uninformed, the modest, the hurried, or the righteous buy them; for by going to the issuing agencies or to Congress one apparently can usually by-pass the Printing Office. The majority of Federal publications are distributed by agencies whose policies may vary, but tend toward generosity, although some agencies recently appear to be tightening up on gifts to individuals. There is no rational policy dividing sales from gifts.

#### SALES POLICY AND LIBRARY USE OF GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

The cost of government documents is a real factor in their use by libraries. Librarians in the Inquiry sample libraries were asked by questionnaire whether they would check titles or increase their orders for government publications if they were openly made available free to all libraries. Most of the libraries, 78 percent, would do a systematic job of checking

<sup>8</sup>The Public Printer did not publish his annual report during the war years, so a precise comparison of sales to costs of publication alone cannot be made except for 1947, when the data can be extracted. The report for 1947 was the first published following the war.

the lists for items of reader interest to be placed with their loan collections for outside circulation, and a smaller, but still significant number (59 percent) would increase their orders for reference materials. One surprising aspect of the answers to this question is that about half of the largest libraries, in cities of more than 500,000, would increase their orders. The factor of cost, in other words, is considered in libraries of all sizes and is not confined, as might have been expected, to the smaller ones. As a rule government publications are not expensive, but even so, more of them would be used by libraries if they were free. Only a few libraries said that the price was the least significant of all their handicaps in acquiring government publications. Apparently the others feel that the price would make a difference.

It is apparent that the system of sales, although it allows 85 percent of government publications to be distributed free, is a deterrent to full library use. The methods of getting free copies are too cumbersome, too devious, or too unpublicized for some librarians to take advantage of them.

**DELAY AND WASTE IN DISTRIBUTION** The librarians also reported considerable delay and waste as a result of the Government's method of distribution. The delay is reported both in the delivery of catalogues of publications and in the delivery of the publications themselves. Two librarians suggested that the Government Printing Office establish regional depots in the same way that some commercial publishers have done as a way to speed deliveries.

We suspect, without any detailed analysis, that the suggested system of regional depots would not reduce the delay. Almost invariably the analysis of handling communications, such as letters, telegrams, cables, packages, orders, or any other media of transacting written business in large organizations, shows that the actual physical transmission takes rela-

tively little time. Distance in space means very little today in any kind of communication. The time is absorbed by handling; by receiving, recording, cross checking, routing for initials, bookkeeping, cataloguing, and other operations which become involved in "procedures" and devour time. No doubt the Government Printing Office could eliminate some of its procedures, which might help to speed up the routine, as could most organizations, but our experience has been that it is no slower than most other institutions in responding at least to cash orders, and indeed faster than some.

Delay in cataloguing can hardly be sustained as a charge in recent months. Beginning in 1948 the *Monthly Catalog* has appeared at the end of the month covered, and the publications listed are about six weeks old from the time of their being received by the Superintendent of Documents.

The problem of waste seems more serious. One depository library reports that because it cannot select its material, in order to get what it wants it must take more than it needs. It would like to be able to select from some of the series which are available (for example, the Census or the Soil Surveys series) only material of interest to its state. "At the present time," says the librarian, "this is not possible. We may receive all or nothing! We need these publications for our own state, but we have neither the need nor the room to store the great bulk of material that would be sent if we asked to receive the series." Another complaint from the same library is that it receives material which has not been requested and for which there is no use.

If this unsolicited material is distributed in the same manner to all depository libraries, it would seem that there would be a great deal of waste involved. In particular this is true of the sets of expensive bound books such as *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (The Nuremberg war criminals trials) or *U.S. Army in World War II*. These may be useful in large college or reference libraries

but are too specialized for small public libraries, and the expense does not seem to be justified.

While this one library is the only one to speak out on this point, the implication of the statement is clear that probable waste is the consequence of the present distribution system. The unsolicited and unwanted material is sent to the libraries by various agencies, not by the Superintendent of Documents.

**DISTRIBUTION OF STATE DOCUMENTS** State distribution follows in general the national pattern, having nearly all the same vices and fewer of the virtues. Its cataloguing, for instance, is less complete. The titles which are reported by the states are recorded each month by the Library of Congress in *The Monthly Checklist of State Publications*, but, for the same reason that many Federal publications escape listing in the *Monthly Catalog* (because the agencies do not report them) many state publications are never listed because the states do not report them to the Library of Congress. No one knows in either case how many government publications are produced without ever being listed.

The librarian who wants a state publication writes directly to the agency of the state government which produced it. If it is for sale, the purchase can be made in various ways. Arrangements for the exchange of publications can sometimes be worked out with state legislative reference libraries. The arrangements for nationwide distribution really do not matter much in this case, however; for only a very few publications will be wanted by the general (not a reference) library outside of the producing state. Each library within its own state has to make its own arrangements with its state government for gift or purchase of selected publications, depending on the laws and regulations of the state, the role and significance of the legislative reference library, and the kinds of publications which might be of interest to the library's clientele. Some

states have a single listing of all their own publications, and California has adopted a depository system.

**THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM OF CALIFORNIA** Until now California has perhaps gone further than any other state in establishing a system of distribution. It is a system designed by the State Documents Committee of the California Library Association under the chairmanship of Jerome K. Wilcox, who is an authority on the distribution to libraries of government publications. This committee was created in 1941 to ascertain what was being published by the state, in itself a comment on the inadequacy of the *Monthly Checklist of State Publications*, and to see what might be done to increase free distribution to libraries. Evelyn Huston, Supervising Government Documents Librarian of the California State Library, describes the work of the committee and the new system in her article, "California Solves Documents Distribution," *Library Journal*, Jan. 1, 1948.

Very briefly, the California plan provides the following:

1. Complete and selective depository libraries, each library agreeing in a contract with the State Director of Finance to (1) accept all such publications and to keep them accessible for use by patrons until such time as the State might agree to their disposal; (2) to provide and maintain adequate facilities for storage and use of all such publications received by it; and (3) to provide qualified personnel to render satisfactory service without charge to qualified patrons in the use of such publications.

In late 1947 there were twenty-one complete and thirty-eight selective depositories.

2. A definition of "publication" to include anything from any state agency that was duplicated in any form except by typewriter and carbon paper, with the exception that publications of the University of California and "intra-office and inter-office publications and forms" were exempt.

3. Routine distribution to depositories of all printed material by the State Printing Office and of all processed material by the issuing agencies. The Library Association committee advocated one central source, in this case the state library stockroom, but it had to compromise on this point.

4. The issuance by the State Printer of a quarterly and an annual list, indexed, of California state publications to include all titles, regardless of source, the various agencies being responsible to the State Printer for reporting all publications that are processed.

This plan is basically akin to the Federal system, but with some modifications of the kind recommended by librarians for the Federal system. It continues the distinction between printed and processed materials by distributing each type, against the will of the librarians, through different agencies, but it includes processed as well as printed materials in the definition of what is to go to the depositories. It provides for a comprehensive catalogue, but relies upon the various agencies to provide the information on their publications.

On the whole the new California system is such an improvement over the previous condition and over the typical state system that it can be cited as a model at this time. As the librarians expected, the compliance with the law by agencies varies with the agencies. The interpretation of "intraoffice" and "interoffice" publications, which are exempt, has caused difficulty. Several of the complete depositories have found that they are receiving materials they do not want, although it is hard to take this seriously, because they could change their status to selective depositories and avoid this.

Against these expected disadvantages are the benefits, summarized by Miss Huston as follows:

First, it means that . . . a part of the State Department of Finance appropriation is earmarked to pay for the distribution of all printed publications to a group of complete and partial depository

libraries. . . . Second, any other library may request from the library stockroom copies of official state publications listed in the quarterly checklist, which will soon be issued. Third, complete depository libraries automatically receive mimeographed publications from the issuing office. Other libraries must request individual publications or be placed on the departmental mailing list.

In practice so far the new plan has meant that any California library can get free of charge any listed state publication it wants, either as a depository, if it enters a contract, or as "any other library." For libraries outside the state, Miss Huston concludes, the new system offers: first, exchange publications through the University of California for libraries outside the United States, and through the State Library for libraries in the United States which are responsible for the exchange of state publications; secondly, a comprehensive quarterly list of California state publications and an annual cumulative list.

State publications in general present the same problems of distribution as do the Federal documents, except that the complications are multiplied by forty-eight, and all the bother must be taken for a smaller number of publications. The solution is more difficult, and the reward less. The California plan exemplifies the concern of libraries and the partially successful solution in the one state: a depository system, a central catalogue which still must depend on issuing agencies for its comprehensiveness, a diffuse source of distribution in the printing office and the various issuing agencies, and a definition that includes both processed and printed publications as materials to be sent to the depository libraries. This may not be much to have been achieved in a model system, but it is more than other states have accomplished. The librarians who worked on the California plan were not responsible for its deficiencies. It was the best they could get from the state legislature and the executive agencies.

DISTRIBUTION OF MUNICIPAL DOCUMENTS There is no catalogue for municipal publications. As has been said, they have been analyzed by the Bureau of the Census for its own purposes, but there is no systematic listing published for the use of those wishing to obtain municipal publications. In Appendix D the Bureau's *Checklist of Basic Municipal Documents* is tabulated to show the number of subjects covered and the number of separate titles listed by each city, as an indication of the volume of municipal reporting.

There are in the list a total of 2,047 titles for the ninety-two cities of one hundred thousand population. Such reports do not represent, by any means, the complete written sources of information upon the activities of municipal government. The diligence of cities in reporting on their work varies from that of Utica, Tampa, and Fort Worth, which list only six titles each, to New York, which lists 155. Of the four largest cities in population, New York lists almost twice as many as Chicago's eighty-five, while Los Angeles drops to forty-one, and Philadelphia to thirty-four. Detroit, with seventy-one, and Boston, with sixty-six, each list more titles than Los Angeles and Philadelphia. For that matter, so do Baltimore, Columbus, the District of Columbia, Reading, St. Louis, and Worcester, all of which are smaller in population. The attention given to municipal reporting seems to depend on no consistent factor. Some cities report widely, and others do not. The size of the city does not control the scope. The answer lies no doubt in the extent to which the cities' governments have accepted the duty of extensive reporting and have taken the initiative in getting information to citizens. Among the several means of presenting information, publications will undoubtedly be more extensive in a city whose government is alert to its function of reporting.

The municipal annual reports have been studied by a few political scientists, and efforts to improve them have been made

by professional groups for a number of years. The annual report would almost inevitably be of interest to a city's own library. Some cities now reach every household with annual reports and order a printing sufficient to provide one copy for every four or five persons. Other cities and counties try to reach all newspaper readers, in lieu of a house-to-house delivery. Some cities make their reports known by means of the news columns in the newspapers and others by paid space. Some cities engage radio time to supplement the distribution of their printed reports. Some cities still ignore the public as an interested audience and comply with the letter of the law by filing only typewritten copies of monotonous and meaningless reports. As an agent in community reporting, the library therefore, has to make its own special arrangements with its city and county governments in order to obtain their documents.

At the same time, many libraries want to know what is being published in other cities and to order some of their publications. The larger reference libraries certainly order publications from all major cities, and some smaller libraries want the municipal publications which might be of interest to their general readers. Their task is made easier by the Census checklist, but they have no recurrent central listing of current output and no centrally co-ordinated distribution. Each library has to write to any city whose reports it wants, and probably to each department within that city whose reports it may want. There is, perhaps, a reciprocal service to be performed here by municipal libraries in exchanging city publications.

## DISTRIBUTION OF INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

For international documents there is no listing of current publication. As has been said, the bibliographies prepared and issued by the World Peace Foundation are as thorough a post-publication coverage as possible. These are the quarterly *Documents of International Organizations; A Selected Bibliography* and a

less comprehensive bibliography published in the quarterly journal, *International Organization*, and also distributed as a reprint by the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Library. Although the lists are belated, a librarian can find in them the titles issued, and there is much to choose from.

The United Nations publications comprise the official records of the various organs (the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council), studies and reports by the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations *Treaty Series*, and several periodicals. In the case of the Secretariat studies and reports, the name of the department preparing them may appear on the title page, but all United Nations publications are published by the United Nations.

The outpouring of this official documentation is enormous. By the autumn of 1946, the first year of operation, the "normal" month's production was 1,700 different documents or titles, 13,000 pages of manuscript, and 36,000 pounds of paper. In November of that year, when the General Assembly was in session, the output was 3,250 different documents, 18,560 pages of manuscript, and 90,000 pounds of paper. This volume has shrunk by now for reasons of economy, verbatim records being published only for the Security Council and summary records for other United Nations organs, but the volume is still too great for any save the larger libraries to consider taking all of it.

In addition to these documents, a growing number are distributed through the specialized agencies of the United Nations. Here the librarian's difficulties may really become acute. Some agencies are anxious to distribute publications; others are either reluctant or unequipped to do so. During the preparation of this report we were told by a librarian that the Food and Agriculture Organization did not send her a copy of its *Report of the FAO Mission to Greece* on the ground that

it was not available. The following day we found the publication on sale in the bookstore at United Nations headquarters at Lake Success.

Such a comment illustrates just one aspect of the inescapable observation that specialized agencies are developing their publications programs in this period following the Second World War without co-ordination and so far without much system. They will produce large numbers of publications in the years to come, and unless some system is established now to enable a librarian to deal with one co-ordinating center, the potential effectiveness of the library's distribution of these publications will be greatly lessened. The international agencies in whose publications the library has the most interest are the United Nations central body, composed of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court, and the Secretariat, and the specialized agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization with headquarters in Washington, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization in Paris, the International Bank and the International Monetary Fund both in Washington, the International Labor Organization in Geneva, the International Civil Aviation Organization in Montreal, or the World Health Organization in New York.

There is some consolidation of distribution effected by the official sales agents of the United Nations. In the United States and in many other countries the United Nations and many of the specialized agencies use the same national sales agents for their publications. In this country, for example, the International Documents Service of the Columbia University Press, New York City, acts as agent not only for the publications of the organs of the United Nations but also for the Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, the World

Health Organization, the International Court of Justice, and the International Trade Organization, as well as the Caribbean Commission. Columbia University Press publishes a monthly news sheet, listing all the publications offered for sale by these international agencies, under the title "The International Reporter," which is available to all librarians on request. Although the International Documents Service of the Columbia University Press offers a wide coverage of the materials, it should be noted that there are a number of specialized agencies that do not use it, and therefore it cannot be considered a center of a co-ordinated and complete system of distribution.

For the convenience of librarians, many United Nations sales agents will accept standing-order subscriptions for various series of United Nations publications. It is possible, for example, to place an order for all of the official records of the various organs, for the official records of the Security Council only, for the various categories of United Nations Secretariat studies and reports, and so forth. A standing order may also be placed for all United Nations publications on public sale. At the present time, it is impossible for the United Nations to establish a subscription price in advance for any of these standing orders. Publications are sent to subscribers by the agents as soon as they are issued, and invoices are rendered periodically.

Each United Nations publication, except for periodicals, the official records, and the *Treaty Series*, carries on the inside front cover or on the reverse of the title page a box containing a United Nations publications sales number, consisting of the year of publication (in Roman numerals) and the number of the publication in this particular category.<sup>4</sup> The sales number (1949.XI.1) would indicate that the book was the first publication in 1949 in Category XI (Publications on Narcotic Drugs). Such sales numbers should provide a convenient

<sup>4</sup>See p. 20 for United Nations categories.

check as to whether all items in a particular category have been received; it should also assist in accurate ordering.

To supplement sales there is developing a system of free distribution. At first, with the advice of the American Library Association, some twenty-five libraries scattered roughly in various regions of the United States were chosen to be depositories for UN documents. These have all been retained, and the system is being expanded all over the world. When finally developed, it will include at least one depository library in each member country, any parliamentary library that requests the privilege, and one depository in every nonmember country in which it is impossible to get the documents to the people by exchange relations. In all, there should be some hundred and fifty such depositories throughout the world, not more than fifteen of which are to be in nonmetropolitan territories. Each depository is permitted to select the language edition of its choice and to choose whether it wishes to receive all United Nations publications or only certain categories, so the depository libraries get as much of the unrestricted printed and mimeographed material as they wish. What they receive from the specialized agencies depends upon the policy of the agencies and the library's relations with them.

Beside the depositories there are certain nongovernmental organizations which are given both printed and mimeographed materials. The "Background Papers" and "Information Papers" of the Department of Public Information are sent free to certain libraries on the department's mailing list, which is continually expanding, and additional sets or extra copies of single papers are supplied to libraries or schools at a minimum charge to cover handling and postage. The area of free distribution is not large at present, but in time it may reach the proportions and the confusion of the Federal system.

The prospects for general free distribution of United Nations documents, however, are slight, owing to the cost in

relation to the money available to the United Nations. In the fall of 1947 it would have cost the United Nations about \$235 to send the full production for one year to Chicago in one language. A price of \$225 has been set for any part of the United States for a year's subscription to all the unrestricted mimeographed documents. Subscriptions to the documents of particular organs cost less, the amount varying with the organs.

This is the time to negotiate a co-ordinated system, before the habits and vested interests become fixed irrevocably. Some discussion has occurred among librarians of New York, primarily concerned with getting all documents needed for research rather than with filling the reading needs of public libraries, but no system has yet resulted. The method and extent of the distribution of all international publications should interest librarians in all types of libraries serving all types of clientele. Since the librarians should be offering their proposals now, several timely observations may be made, which may help toward a solution.

First, whatever system of distribution is adopted, it must apply to all countries of the world. What may suit American libraries may not suit those in France, or Norway, or China.

Secondly, when the volume of world distribution becomes large, the United Nations can scarcely be expected to deal directly with individual libraries in any of the member nations, although it has done so sometimes heretofore. The depository system is one instance. Another is the mailing list of the Department of Public Information, which includes individual libraries. Nevertheless, in the long run the UN will probably, in this as in its other relations with member nations, want to deal with one central agency in the United States. The sovereignty of states in the United Nations will mean that the international organization will deal primarily with national governments or with semi-public agencies representing nations.

**CONCLUSION** Although librarians and other critics are in general agreement on the desirable features of a co-ordinated system for distributing government documents, changing circumstances together with political and administrative pressures have created highly irrational and unco-ordinated methods for all levels of government. Cataloguing is not selective; the routine of ordering is both cumbersome and costly; and the mechanics of payment are difficult. A consistent policy governing both free distribution and sales has not been set up. Depository libraries are a recognized means of making documents available for public use, but they include only a very small portion of the public libraries in the land.

The lack of a centralized information and ordering service is perhaps the most glaring defect in the distribution system for all types of government publications. It seems also to be the obstacle most difficult to overcome; for even in a model system, such as that of California, it is only partially cured.

The evidence from the drafting and the adoption of the California plan indicates that librarians can have an effective influence upon legislation. It would seem to follow, then, that the distributing methods of the United Nations, not as yet fixed and drifting into bad habits, might respond to the guidance of librarians. Even the confirmed disorganization of the Federal Government is not incorrigible; librarians can contribute to a reformation here too.

## 3

## THE LIBRARY'S USE OF GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

BECAUSE OF THE UNORGANIZED CHARACTER of the wealth of knowledge contained in government publications, the librarian, as an expert in its use, has an important function. As an institution, furthermore, the public library has, for all the reasons of its existence, an important contribution and a real responsibility for the efficient use of government publications.

**THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AS A DISTRIBUTING AGENCY** As a distributing agency for government publications the public library has three particularly significant attributes:

1. The public library is the most accessible source of books in the nation, especially so for government publications. Retail book dealers are to be found only in the more sizable cities or in towns with special customers, such as college students or tourists. In any case government publications are almost never sold through retail book dealers. The library is the only accessible source for them even in cities where bookstores exist, certainly for all citizens except the very rare person who becomes aware of a publication and buys it by mail, or who receives free copies sent by Congressmen and other officials.

2. The library has the educational function of leading interested readers to sources of information, including government publications. A librarian, like any other authoritative agent in the process of communication, chooses from many items the few which are to be brought to the attention of individuals. Since no individual could possibly read all that is available,

he must choose, and the librarian will participate in the choice by deciding what is to be placed on the shelves. The most effective agent in developing urban awareness of government publications is the public library. In rural areas the Agricultural Extension Service, as a joint enterprise of Federal, state, and county governments, represented at the local outlet by the County Agent, has been distributing government publications for years directly to citizens.

3. The public library is an agency of government and therefore can be expected to be concerned with the function of communication between government and the citizens. The public library is a governmental unit, just as the schools, the highway department, the public health service, and the police and fire services are parts of the Government. It shares to some extent in the responsibilities of government, even those of the Federal Government. The mere fact that it does not receive funds from the Federal Government does not absolve it from a responsibility to the nation as well as to the state and municipality. The very system of federalism on which our nation is founded assumes the sharing of responsibility and a division of authority. The public library of any town must be concerned with the affairs of the nation as well as of those of the home town, and this will include a concern with communication between the Federal Government and the citizens. We would add international government as well, with the qualification that the United Nations and the attendant international organizations are not governments, but conferences of sovereign nations, and the interest of the United States in each of them is formulated and represented by the Federal Government.

#### ACQUISITION OF GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS BY LIBRARIES

Most libraries receive some government publications from one or more of the various governmental sources, but the volume

and the variety vary directly with the size of the community served by the library. In general, only the larger libraries make available to their readers any considerable amount of the mass of publications flowing in from the Government. This is understandable, and even to be expected, from what we have already seen of the specialized nature of much of the government output. It is also to be expected because of the stringent demands on the time of the personnel and on the space available in the smaller libraries.

If we assign roughly the values of "many" and "few" to the acquisition of government publications, we can see for publications from each of the government sources a clear dividing line between the larger and the smaller libraries. For Federal publications the line is between the libraries serving communities of fifty to one hundred thousand and those serving more than one hundred thousand. For publications from the library's own state government, there is a similar dividing line. Only the largest libraries, those serving cities of more than five hundred thousand, receive many publications from state governments other than the library's own state.

The values of "many" and "few" depend here on the relative number of publications acquired by the libraries in cities of various sizes. In the case of Federal publications, for example, "many" means more than one thousand publications a year, but in the case of publications from other local governments it means one hundred to five hundred publications a year. The conclusions are based on estimates made by the Inquiry's sample libraries of the number of publications received each year from the various government sources.

Only libraries serving cities of more than two hundred and fifty thousand receive many publications from their own local governments, while only those serving more than five hundred thousand receive many publications from local governments other than their own. In a time when international affairs have

become as important to the citizen as the condition of the street in front of his house, only libraries serving more than five hundred thousand people receive many publications from international agencies.

The county libraries, which serve rural communities, receive a few publications from the Federal Government, from their own states, and from international agencies, but they receive almost none from other states, and only about half receive anything from their own local governments and from other local governments. We should note here, however, that the extension services of the state land-grant colleges and the U. S. Department of Agriculture reach millions of rural citizens with government publications.

The most significant revelation to be found in all these estimates, in terms of the role of the public library as a channel of communication between government and citizen, is that under the present system of choosing what to publish and the present system of distribution the larger libraries are the only ones that show an interest in most government publications. The smaller libraries do not acquire many publications. The inference is plain. Government publications are not regarded as important save in the large libraries, in cities of one hundred thousand and more, and even in those the material is used chiefly for reference purposes.

**GOVERNMENT "BEST SELLERS"** It is also significant that public libraries taken as a whole, including the small and the large, have not acquired more than about half of twenty-six selected "best sellers" of the Federal Government, which have proved popular with a large audience. The publications in this list either offer instruction on how to do something, for example, care for a baby, fly an airplane, build or repair a house, or they are statements of factual information, for example, a record of postage stamps, or rates of obsolescence for the in-

come tax. They appeal to the readers of that large and familiar audience which wants to know how to do something or wants facts on a particular subject. Yet only half of the possible total number of titles that might have been acquired by public libraries from this list had been acquired by them in the spring of 1948.

The titles of twenty-six Federal "best sellers," the number of copies sold, and prices are listed in order of their sales.

**U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE LIST OF SELECTED BEST SELLERS AS OF JULY, 1947**

<i>Title</i>	<i>Number of Copies Sold to Date</i>	<i>Price</i>
1. Infant Care, Children's Bureau, Publication No. 8	3,907,329	\$ .15
2. Prenatal Care, Children's Bureau, Publication No. 4	2,265,038	.05
3. Your Child from One to Six, Children's Bureau Publication No. 30	1,772,702	.15
4. Pilots Powerplant Manual, Civil Aeronautics Bulletin 28	400,558	1.25
5. Practical Air Navigation, Civil Aeronautics Bulletin 24	388,457	1.50
6. Civil Pilot Training, Civil Aeronautics Bulletin 23	364,697	.65
7. Meteorology for Pilots, Civil Aeronautics Bulletin 25	363,169	1.00
8. Furniture, Its Selection and Use	339,974	.10
9. A Description of U.S. Postage Stamps (1939 to 1945 editions inclusive)	276,862	.45
10. You Can Make It, Practical Uses of Secondhand Boxes and Odd Pieces of Lumber, Vol. 1	251,683	.15
11. Pilots Airplane Manual, Civil Aeronautics Bulletin 27	219,258	.40
12. Aerodynamics for Pilots, Civil Aeronautics Bulletin 26	163,008	.60
13. You Can Make It for Profit, Vol. 3	153,080	.15

Title	Number of Copies Sold to Date	Price
14. Basic Photography, Technical Manual 1-219	130,729	.65
15. You Can Make It For Camp and Cottage, Vol. 2	119,968	.15
16. Care and Repair of the House	117,333	.20
17. Study Guide and Reference Material for Commercial Radio Operator Examinations	108,487	.20
18. Screw-thread Standards for Federal Services, Bureau of Standards Handbook 28	100,557	.60
19. Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes	79,795	.30
20. Bulletin F, Income Tax, Depreciation and Obsolescence, Estimated Useful Lives and Depreciation Rates	64,006	.25
21. Light Frame House Construction	57,552	.45
22. Veterans' Benefits, Veterans' Administration Pamphlet No. 44	43,400	.15
23. Radio Instruments and Measurements, Bureau of Standards Circular 74	43,083	.75
24. Mechanical Practice	41,154	.15
25. Export and Import Practice, Trade Promotion Series 175	39,738	.50
26. Construction Contract, Parts 1 and 2, for Rural Electrical Distribution Project	38,688	1.50

The most popular subjects treated in Federal publications are how to have and take care of babies and how to fly, as shown by figures on sales from the Government Printing Office. The baby books and the books on flying (in much smaller numbers) provide the first six titles of largest sale in the above selected list prepared by the Superintendent of Documents as of July, 1947. Next come titles on the selection and use of furniture and on the description of postage stamps. These titles may be taken as samples of government publications of the

type that would be of interest to nearly any library. Yet only eight of the fifty-five libraries in the sample had all these government best sellers in stock in the spring of 1948.

The extent to which the sample libraries in cities of various sizes have acquired these "best sellers" as compared with the total potential of titles that could have been acquired is shown below.

Size of Library Community	Number of Libraries in Sample	Possible Acquisitions from Best-Seller List of 26 Titles	Acquisitions from Best-Seller List	Percentage of Total Possible Acquisitions
2,500-5,000	3	78	17	22
5,000-10,000	5	130	12	9
10,000-25,000	8	208	44	21
25,000-50,000	6	156	41	26
50,000-100,000	5	130	67	52
100,000-250,000	7	182	144	79
250,000-500,000	5	130	122	94
More than 500,000	8	208	197	95
County-rural	8	208	39	19
Total	55	1,430	683	48

A comparison of library acquisitions and public purchases is also revealing. With a few exceptions the public libraries, since they have not acquired all the Government's best sellers, have tended to choose those which have been most popular with the buying audience. By and large they have acquired only about half the titles in this list of popular and inexpensive publications—the half that is most in demand.

requested or of the sources from which information is supplied in answer to reference questions, so not many can estimate with any assurance just how many requests they get for government publications by name or how many requests for information they fill from government publications.

We queried librarians in the sample libraries on this point. Only a few librarians made any estimate in reply. Thus, the librarians of three libraries in the same population class, 100,000 to 250,000, estimated that they receive three, four, and twelve requests, respectively, a week for government publications by name; in cities of the 250,000-500,000 group the librarians estimated five, eight, twelve, and eighteen such requests, respectively; and in the cities above 500,000 three librarians estimated 58, 150, and 1,828 requests, respectively. It seems doubtful that such variations would appear in the practices of the same size libraries, hence probably the estimates are very rough indeed. At most they indicate that in the larger libraries the number of requests for government publications by title is so significant that some librarians have made estimates of the number of such requests.

The estimates of the use of government publications as reference sources to fill requests for miscellaneous information show similar variations and hence the accuracy is equally dubious. The estimates, such as they are, indicate again that the number of requests is significant and that government publications provide an important source of information. In cities of 100,000-250,000 population, three libraries estimated 38, 62, and 100 requests per week for information which was supplied from government publications; in the cities of 250,000-500,000 three libraries estimated 21, 61, and 119 requests per week; and in the cities of more than 500,000 population, three libraries estimated 200, 769, and 4,000 requests per week.

Probably more significant and an added confirmation of the assumption that government documents in the large libraries

are important reference sources are the statements made by some librarians based on their impressions of their own experience. From a west coast city, a note to the author says, "Both Reference and Technology Departments estimate that easily one-third of their questions are answered by government publications. The Business Department which makes almost constant use of this type of material estimates that easily three-fourths of questions are answered by government publications." From a metropolitan public library comes the comment: "The Business and Civic Department answers at least two-thirds of reference questions through documents. In 1947 we used 125,591 documents in the room to help patrons with questions."

#### THE ACCESSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS IN THE LIBRARY

It is far from easy for an untrained person to find government documents and pamphlets in a typical library catalogue, where librarians tend to duplicate for their clientele the difficulties they themselves encounter in ordering from the government catalogues.

Relatively few libraries, and those chiefly in the largest cities, list all their government publications in their general catalogues so that any reader searching for all the publications available on any particular subject would find the government publications included. Only seven out of forty-two libraries list all government publications in their general catalogues. Of the seven, five are in cities of more than 500,000 population; one is in a city of between 250,000 and 500,000, and one is in a city of 25,000-50,000.

Of the libraries in our sample half list in the general catalogue only titles which they think will be of general interest. This is roughly true of all the libraries in cities of 25,000 up to 500,000; those in the cities above 500,000, as may be seen above, list all government publications in the general catalogue.

The librarians in half the cities from 25,000 to 500,000, in other words, recognize that some government publications have appeal for general readers, and these they list in the card catalogue, from which general readers can have at least a chance of learning that they exist. The other half do not list even the titles that might have general interest. In half the libraries, of various sizes above 25,000 and below the very largest libraries, government publications are apparently considered as "documents," to be classified for reference use, but not as publications that might be of interest to ordinary readers.

For example, a reader browsing in the catalogue for material on civil rights would not find *To Secure These Rights*, the report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights and a readable, popular book, because it would be classed as a "document." In half the libraries such a pamphlet would be in the same file with routine statistical reports from government agencies. The rule in these libraries seems to be: "If it's a government publication, bury it, except for reference purposes!" In most libraries popular government publications have suffered because of their family connections. They belong to a category that is principally reference material and not expected to be interesting to anyone save specialized readers.

## LIBRARY CIRCULATION OF GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

Library

policy toward the circulation of government documents is significant, because the privilege of taking home a book for general reading, as distinct from having to read it in the reference room, affects the availability of the book to the general reader.

Only seven out of thirty-seven libraries which answered our question about loan privileges allow all government publications to circulate, but twenty-six out of thirty-two allow the circulation of publications which they consider of general interest. Thirty-one of forty-one, or three-fourths of those

answering the question, acquire an extra copy of any publication which would be of interest to their readers so that one copy is retained for reference use and the extra copy may circulate. These practices would indicate that to a greater extent than the listing in their general catalogues would lead one to expect, libraries have recognized that some government publications are designed for reading and have allowed their circulation outside the library in order to make it easier for readers to use them. Depository libraries may circulate depository items if they choose to do so, according to Depository Libraries Instruction No. 3, issued by the Superintendent of Documents. But it should be recognized that a librarian has no sure way of knowing which government publications will be of interest to the general clientele.

**LIBRARY PROBLEMS IN HANDLING PROCESSED MATERIALS** Librarians, in their comments on government publications, show a genuine interest in their use, but some find them awkward to handle. The paper bindings bother a few librarians, who say that pamphlets cannot be shelved or circulated, until they have been put between stiff covers. One librarian objects to mimeographed publications as "not worth storage space; they are ephemeral, cheap, in many cases one sheet. They attract no attention if put on display and are a constant irritation." It is difficult to see how the Government could meet these objections. One solution might be to bind a certain number of such publications for libraries only, but who could determine which publications a library would want to shelve? And if there should be much money wasted because of the extra cost, the extra expense could not be justified in the public interest.

The same is true of processed material. From the viewpoint of a government agency, the chief purpose of a publication is always something other than storage in a library. If mimeographing will satisfy the main purpose most economically

and effectively, then libraries must adjust their filing systems to mimeographed material rather than expect the Government to change its policy. One might point out, in defense of the significance of much of the mimeographed material, that some of the vital statements of governmental policy have been mimeographed and often have not appeared in any printed and bound publication. The speeches of some public officials may never be publicly presented except in a mimeographed press release.

As for the brevity of some of the mimeographed material, it is difficult to see why anyone deluged by the glut of words in our present time should object to brevity. If it is brief and worthless, it should be thrown away. If it is brief, but significant, then it requires less space to file and is easier to read. No doubt the requests for the short, pointed talk by President Lincoln at Gettysburg far outnumber the requests, if any, for the two-hour oration by Mr. Everett at the same affair.

This is not to say that the problem of filing government documents is insignificant for the librarian. The difficulties of caring for paper-bound pamphlets that will be wanted for outside circulation are real and serious. So is the problem of vertical files and keeping track of their contents and fitting them into the established routines of library procedure. It seems that the solution for such problems, however, must come from the libraries themselves, not from government agencies, whose policies are based on other concerns. Changes in the technology of binding so as to speed it up and make it cheaper could partly solve this problem. Imagination is needed here. Whatever devices are worked out will have to be discovered and adopted in the libraries themselves.

PROMOTION OF GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS      In general there has been little co-operation between libraries and the Government to promote the reading of government material, but

at the same time there have been few obstructive differences of opinion between them. From replies to questionnaires it appears that the great majority of libraries (thirty-nine out of forty-six) have never been approached by the Government with suggestions relative to acquiring their publications, and only thirty-three out of forty-five have had any communication with the Government about promoting the use of its publications. At the same time the great majority of libraries (thirty-eight out of forty-six) report that they have never found that government agencies make it difficult to secure their publications.

The exceptions to this statement, however, are significant. The one conspicuous effort since the war to promote the reading of government publications in libraries was that of the Division of Publications of the U.S. Department of State. With the collaboration of the International Relations Office of the American Library Association, this division in the spring of 1946 offered to send to libraries which agreed to participate selected publications on international affairs. At the same time it was setting up regional distribution centers to which requests for copies of publications could be referred by the libraries. Displays of these publications were encouraged. The department sent extra copies for display, photographs of suggested displays, a sample press release on each display, and background posters. In August, 1947, 187 libraries were participating in the program.

A check-up on the program by a mailed questionnaire was summarized in the fall of 1947, and the seventy-five replies received in response to the 187 questionnaires mailed out were encouraging. Displays, newspaper publicity, and to a smaller extent radio programs had called attention to the publications. The greatest interest in the project had been shown by teachers, students, and organizations.

A surprising number of libraries, 74 percent of those in our

sample, in some measure, either on their own initiative or by participation in the State Department program have promoted the use of government publications. These libraries have accepted their educational responsibility to show readers where information is available. The extent of the promotion has varied greatly. Usually it has been in the form of an exhibit, probably built around a special subject or a particular "week," or the inclusion of government publications on the periodic book lists issued by the library, or the mention of government publications in newspaper releases. Sometimes it is no more than word-of-mouth recommendation of some government pamphlet. No matter the scope and form; the significant point is that librarians have included government publications in their programs of promotion.

This friendly attitude toward government publications—and it is revealed in more ways than by such promotion—does not mean, however, that libraries would enlarge their acquisitions of government publications under present circumstances, barring the possibility that they should be made available to them without cost. Seventy-four percent of the libraries in our sample would not increase their use of government publications, because administrative factors, such as budget and accounting and the limitations of space and personnel would discourage it. This is true of libraries in all the various sizes of communities, although only half of the libraries in the largest cities, 250,000 and above, would be deterred for these reasons, in comparison with three fourths of all the libraries.

Lack of space and lack of personnel are outstanding deterrents to expansion, and such cramped conditions also seem to hamper libraries of all sizes. Budget and accounting factors are much less significant, no doubt because the cost of government publications is relatively small compared to that of many other items. A few libraries would not expand because they are near depository libraries to which they can refer any requests rather than draw upon their own stock of government publications.

**SUMMARY** By and large librarians think government publications are significant, and their attitude toward them is friendly but they have failed to develop to the full their potentials for general readers. Nor would they expand their acquisitions under present circumstances, despite a favorable attitude. In order to get popular government publications to citizens through the public library it would be necessary to bridge the gap between the libraries, which are amenable and probably persuadable, and the producer. Procedures need to be changed, but the difficulties are by no means insurmountable provided both parties are willing to share the responsibility for getting more official information to more citizens.

## 4

LIBRARY AND  
GOVERNMENT CO-OPERATION

THE OBSERVER from the outside of any institution should always make clear his alien role before he suggests the reforms that seem indicated by the conditions which he has observed. A social scientist should clearly recognize his own assumptions and be aware of their effect upon his observations. He does not yet live in a world where truth is immutable, and the best he can do is to try to chart distinctly his own path through the evidence.

Our assumption is that the public should have the best available information upon which to base its judgments and actions. Spreading this information throughout our society is a function of communication. The content of communication, what is said in the stream of sound and image that flows around every citizen, is produced by a great variety of sources, among which government agencies are significant.

Moreover, in a democracy it is safe and even commendable for government to present its case on public issues as long as it does not monopolize the stream of communication. As long as the information from government sources must compete with that from various other sources and the judgment of the audience is formed as a result of the competition, the process of democracy will be served. Any danger of government domination of opinion lies in the creation of a total governmental monopoly over information. The implication is clear that some of the information issued by government will be, and is in fact, slanted, in the sense that it is prepared for the

purpose of persuading its audience to form a judgment which is favorable to the issuing government agency. Most information that enters into the formation of a public policy is slanted in this sense. The element of competition still protects democratic processes, and if other agents of communication are to be allowed to present their cases, then government officials must be allowed to present theirs in competition.

This is the approach of a political scientist, not that of a practicing librarian. The political scientist called upon to look at the public library in America and its role in the distribution of government publications will think first of the library as an institution engaged in the process of communication. It is the institution which is most concerned with the distribution of serious reading matter to adults.

Since the public library is a public institution, the political scientist will also think of it as a part of the governmental machinery by which the community, from the village to the nation, is served. The library is a service agency of government. Its purpose is chiefly to handle communications, to take publications from their sources and to pass them to the public, and its responsibility as an agency of government in a democratic country is to promote a better informed citizenry.

When measured by the yardstick of effective communication between government and citizen by means of publications, the present system is no more than a feeble beginning of what might be. Neither government nor the library has put much effort into making government publications available. Both have failed to analyze imaginatively their roles in the production and distribution of information from governmental sources, and both have failed to advocate with strength and determination the kind of practice which may well be essential if the people are to continue to be not only free but also competent to govern themselves.

Much of the talk about government publications, when it

is not concerned wholly with their use as reference sources, is reminiscent of a day when society and government could depend upon person-to-person discussions. One waits in vain for the specialists in either government or the libraries to admit that the world has become complex and that people now talk to each other largely through mass media. The job of specialists in publications is to make their medium effective in its recent role.

If any evidence is needed that the agents of information in publications as a whole have not mastered their new role in society, one need only look at the general field of books, as William Miller has done in his report for the Public Library Inquiry, *The Book Industry* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1949), or at the special field of pamphlet publication, as we have done casually as background for the study of government publications. Book publishers, even with the guidance of past sales records, are still unsure what book will appeal to which readers, and they have yet to find a system of distribution for their product that will reach all potential readers. The nongovernmental publishers of pamphlets have even less system in distribution, because commercial book dealers do not like to be bothered with pamphlets.

The typical nongovernmental publishers mail their pamphlets to a list of people who are already convinced of what the pamphlet is trying to argue then hope that libraries and organized discussion groups will absorb some additional copies. There is no one place where an interested person can be informed about all the pamphlets available on any given subject and how to obtain them. Various indexes have to be searched. There is no way to ascertain, except by intuition and experience, which of the numerous pamphlets issued each month are valid discussions and honest persuasions, which are malicious and dishonest, and which are the output of lunatics, who turn to pamphleteering in considerable numbers. No one re-

views pamphlets as commercial books are reviewed. This is nearly a reproduction of the picture we have sketched of the handling of government publications.

**DEFECTS IN THE PRESENT SYSTEM SUMMARIZED** But to turn specifically to government publications and library practice, we might summarize the findings of the preceding pages which point up the inadequacy of the present system when measured against what is desirable.

First, at present the government lists all publications in the same way; the breakdown of the lists is by issuing agency rather than by content or subject. Agencies of government have long since ceased to be the most revealing basis for classification, because nearly every agency deals with a great variety of subjects.

We are not merely concerned, however, with complaints about the present system of listing. Any classification would have its disadvantages and a good index can compensate for many inadequacies, as the present Federal *Monthly Catalog* does for each month's output and in the cumulative annual index for the year as a whole. The point is that this system of listing illustrates the prevalent conception that government publications are all of one type, whereas actually they are as varied as are any other broad group of publications. One might as well say that all books put out by commercial publishers are of the same type and should be treated identically. The controlling factor in classification would then become the name of the publisher rather than the subject of the book.

Secondly, no clear distinction is made between publications which contain important information and argument relevant to broad public problems and those which present routine factual information or are designed to improve the condition of the individual reader. A policy pamphlet, such as *To Secure These Rights*, the report of the President's Committee on Civil

Rights, which is an analysis of where we stand on the protection of the Bill of Rights and a proposal for future policy, may be picked up by the newspapers and given special publicity. On the other hand, it might be announced in the same way as would a routine report on a minerals survey. In any case the librarian should not be dependent on the newspapers' definition of news in order to know about significant government publications. Newspapers are of many sorts, ranging from the worthless to the thorough, and in many localities not all the significant news will be published. More important is the fact that books and pamphlets are among the few media for breaking through the special, limited newspaper definition of what is news. If the library as an institution of communication becomes handicapped by the same restrictions that govern newspapers in deciding what to print, the unfortunate citizen has lost one of his last possible sources of getting information unless it is "news."

Thirdly, under the present system there is no sure way for the librarian to know which government publications will be of general interest. The list of *Selected Publications* issued by the Government Printing Office for Federal publications is an effort to present every two weeks the items which are expected to have popular appeal. Certainly it is easier to read than the *Monthly Catalog*, and it is by far the most advanced effort in any field of government publications to segregate those items which should be popular. Our response from librarians, however, indicates that it is not the whole answer. Another aid is the list of "Previews" of selected forthcoming publications in each issue of the *Monthly Catalog*. It is short and easily read, but still not completely satisfactory.

Fourthly, the distribution of government publications reveals a complex and frustrating confusion concerning the purpose of publishing and the function of government. It reflects a mass of contradictions. Some agencies give away as many

publications as they can afford, while the law forbids the Government Printing Office to give to anyone save a limited number of depository libraries. The policy established by law is to sell government publications, but some 85 percent are given away under appropriations passed by the same Congresses which keep the restrictive laws on the books. The law assumes that public documents shall be available to citizens in public libraries, but maintains a depository system which allows most of the favored libraries to choose what they want and denies to any nondepository library the right to get any publications free unless they get them directly from the agencies themselves or from members of Congress.

Congress, the Government Printing Office, and the executive agencies of the Federal Government have never agreed on the basic theory of government publication and distribution. Members of Congress contradict themselves by acting individually to give away publications while they vote to restrict publication and free distribution. The purposes of the executive agencies vary. The Government Printing Office, hedged in by legal restrictions, cannot become dominant and achieve co-ordination because, oddly, it has never been given the full legal authority with which to enforce its decisions.

Fifthly, much government information is lost because it is contained in processed documents which remain uncatalogued and undistributed.

Sixthly, taken as a whole, public libraries have not acquired as many of the proved best sellers of government as might have been expected. Government publications are available widely only in libraries serving cities of 100,000 and more population, and in these libraries they are used mainly for reference.

Seventhly, librarians are fairly friendly toward the use of government publications, and government officials are favorable toward the libraries. The present inadequacy is not the result of ill will, but rather a baffling predicament resulting

from tradition, accumulated practices, and laws that badly need revision. Most of the librarians consulted in this study have said that they would like to use more government publications, especially for the purpose of informing citizens on policies and on popular factual information. Without exception the government officials have said that they would like to see more of their publications read by the average citizen and would be glad to increase their distribution through libraries, provided it could be done effectively. As a corollary it might be said that no one is satisfied with the present condition.

What has been said in this seven-point summary applies to government publications from all types of government agencies, from Federal, state, and municipal governments of the United States and from the international agencies. The situation is less serious in some governments than in others, but in general it is the same for all.

In Bernard Berelson's book *The Library's Public* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1949), written for the Public Library Inquiry, there is evidence to indicate that the library serves a group of people who are opinion leaders in their communities. They are persons who read for information, and for them government documents will have real value. If the government wants to reach influential citizens with its publications, one clearly marked avenue would seem to be through the library. If this is to be done effectively, however, the whole approach to information from government sources should be redirected.

A NEW GOVERNMENTAL POLICY      A paradox of the present situation is that while executive agencies produce a large volume of publications, always under appropriations granted by Congress, the official attitude of Congress is to oppose executive publicity in principle. This attitude produced in 1919 a law,

still on the books, which forbids the use of any part of any appropriation for services, messages, or publications designed to influence any member of Congress in his attitude toward legislation or appropriation, except as a member of Congress may request information or as officials communicate through the proper channels. This provision has been a constant threat to executive agencies with regard to their programs of publication. They never know when some member of Congress will charge that some specific publication is an effort to influence legislation. A subcommittee in the 80th Congress, for instance, charged both the Army and the Federal Security Agency with general violation of the law in their attempts to get universal military training and public health insurance. Probably the law has not reduced the volume of publication, but it has, perhaps, prevented some timid agencies from speaking out on matters of public policy while bolder agencies have taken a chance. The threat of censure distorts the program of publication by discouraging discussion of policies.

This gag law of 1919 should be repealed, and executive agencies should be allowed, even encouraged, to issue publications which they decide the public should have for its information. The controls by Congress can be exercised through appropriation bills and through other legislation if an executive agency oversteps the bounds of democratic propriety. Congress, in its new role, would in fact be a much stronger guardian of the public interest against possible abuse by the executive branch than it is now, when it relies on an unrealistic law to stem the tide of history.

After receiving their bill of rights the executive agencies, of course, should analyze their programs of publication to make sure they fulfill their responsibility to the public. This has seldom been done in government. More prevalent is the haphazard approach, deciding what should be published without much foresight and piling up a large volume of printing

without necessarily any strict economy being effected by a careful editorial program. The specialist on information, who exists in most agencies, may not even be consulted at the time programs are being developed in the agency as a whole. The duty of the executive branch is to plan its publications with the same care that it plans its other programs and to make sure that information for the general public is published with the same frequency and clarity as information for the benefit of particular clientele groups.

Next among the tasks of a co-operative Congress is a complete overhauling of the present printing laws. This would involve a thorough analysis of the present Title 44 of the U.S. Code and the consideration of a number of changes. We are concerned here only with changes which would facilitate the co-ordination of production and distribution of government publications. The end result to be sought would be more economical publication for the Government, the reaching of a maximum of interested readers at a minimum of cost, greater assurance that libraries will be able to obtain whatever publications they want. This would also make it easier for citizens to get the publications they want.

Nothing less than a complete revision of present practices is feasible. A piecemeal change would satisfy no one and would accomplish little. In the past, most proposals for change in government publishing have dealt with only part of the process. The only effective remedy is a general revision to be effected simultaneously in all the agencies concerned. At present the processes of government publication are so interlocked that no one practice can be changed without affecting the others.

What, then, are the changes that should be made in production and distribution? What are the changes that should be included in the major overhauling?

**CO-ORDINATION OF DISTRIBUTION** The responsibility for co-ordinating all distribution should be placed with the Superintendent of Documents. Direct distribution by executive agencies or by members of Congress, except as ordered by the Government Printing Office, should be discontinued. This would mean that all requests for publications would go to the Superintendent of Documents. Librarians would have to deal with only one distributing agency. The Superintendent of Documents might fill the request from his stock or, especially if the publication is processed in a duplicating plant of an executive agency, he might collect the money if it is on sale, approve the shipment, and send the order to the executive agency.

The main point is that as long as there is no central co-ordinating agency, wasteful duplication in distribution is inevitable; an applicant may write to several different places and get the same document from at least two of them. When an agency accumulates a surplus of publications, it may on its own initiative send free copies to any library at random and thus may add to the wastage, as nearly any librarian can testify who has received unordered and unwanted duplicate copies.

The Superintendent of Documents now prevents some duplication by controlling the printed matter sent to the standing mailing lists of the agencies. This proposal would give him not only the mailing-lists distribution but also the co-ordinating control of all distribution, although his office would not necessarily handle physically the material which could more efficiently be shipped from the agency with his approval.

For years various officials have been annoyed by the obvious confusion in the present system of distribution. We see no sure way of achieving efficiency except to authorize one agency to co-ordinate distribution and act as a sales and order office for all government publications printed or proc-

essed. A comprehensive law such as is contemplated in all these proposals would have to prohibit, of course, all distribution of publications by any other agency except as approved by the Government Printing Office. The present law has a loophole which allows the agencies to distribute their own publications free of charge.

These agencies will protest against any change, except one which will give them more autonomy. They will say that the Printing Office is intolerably slow, that they must choose certain recipients for their publications if they are to accomplish their programs, and that central co-ordination would restrict the distribution of publications when expansion is most needed. These are good arguments. By efficient practices the proposed system must refute them. If it satisfies speed and economy, but loses sight of its purpose to increase the use of publications, it will be no improvement, and the present confusion and waste might prove to be less undesirable in terms of the public interest. We think, however, that a clarified system in which citizens could deal with one center would increase the use of the publications, especially if all of the following proposals are adopted at the same time.

The argument that the Government Printing Office is slow in distribution can be partially answered now. This is an argument based more on past performance than on present and is not valid at all when measured by the intention of the present Superintendent of Documents. As a matter of fact, he is apparently more concerned with speeding up the handling of orders than with any other one particular aspect of his function. He has already accomplished much, and he is still working on speeding up the procedures.

We should note that this proposal applies mainly to distribution from Washington, D.C. Variations would be needed for publications distributed by field offices. If, as has been proposed by some librarians, regional branches of the Super-

intendant's office were established, they might perform for field offices of the agencies in their regions the same function that the main office provides for agencies in Washington. More likely to accomplish the important purpose of getting publications into the hands of readers would be, however, a direct sales and give-away system of the sort to be discussed later. This would make field publications directly available in the field for citizens (and libraries) who are most interested in regional or local material.

**TRANSFERENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE** The Government Printing Office was established in 1860 to cure a corrupt practice by which the political party in power used contracts for printing as patronage, with a kickback to party funds. This element of partisan graft plus the fact that at the time of the Continental Congress printing was started as a function of Congress, make up the historical accidents by which the Printing Office became established as an agent of Congress rather than as an executive agency. No doubt, too, the printing of the Legislative Branch was a larger proportion of the total amount spent for Federal printing in the nineteenth century, and Congress conceived of printing, even apart from its possibilities as patronage, as primarily a service to the Legislature.

We do not have at hand the record before 1900, but since 1900 the amount spent for Congressional printing as compared with the amount spent for executive printing has been steadily declining. Printing for the Judicial Branch has consistently been too small to be significant in the total. LeRoy Charles Merritt has compiled the record from 1900 through 1940, in Table 8 of his book *The United States Government as Publisher*. It shows that in each decade Legislative printing accounted for the following percentage of the total.

Year	Percentage
1900	52.80
1910	42.47
1920	27.99
1930	27.27
1940	21.86

For the fiscal year ended June 30, 1947, according to our computation from the total charges for work and to whom delivered, in the *Annual Report of the Public Printer*, 1947, Table 5, the proportion of printing for the Legislative Branch was 16.94 percent of the total. The Legislative Branch in these accounts is defined to include Congress itself and the agencies attached to it, such as the Library of Congress and the Government Printing Office. During the years of the Second World War no report of the Public Printer was published, so that we cannot be sure that the drop from 21.86 to 16.94 percent between 1940 and 1947 indicates a firm continuation of the earlier trend. In any case, regardless of current trends, it is clear that printing for the Legislative Branch has on the average amounted only to about one fourth of all United States Government printing since 1920. The preponderance of Congressional concern in the printing facilities has long since disappeared.

Any agency of the Government performs mixed functions, partly legislative and partly executive, not to mention the judicial function that is also frequently included. The executive agencies are in a sense the servants of Congress, just as they are responsible to the President, and some of the independent boards and commissions are about equally divided in their responsibility, although they are technically located in the Executive Branch. For a long time, however, there has been a recurring recommendation of the specialists in public administration to place agencies with predominantly executive functions in the Executive Branch, with a clear line of

responsibility to the President, so that they can be directed in a line of command and so that he can be held responsible for their policies. The Government Printing Office is primarily an executive agency in its function, and it should be placed in the Executive Branch of the Government, where it could co-ordinate the publishing and the distribution of publications for the entire Government, exercising the authority of the President as Chief Executive in its control of the various agencies. In a study for the President's Committee on Administrative Management in 1937, A. E. Buck recommended that it be placed in a proposed Bureau of Supply in the Treasury.

The Printing Office as a part of the Executive could perform in the field of printing and distribution functions similar to those performed now by the Bureau of the Budget with relation to budgeting and management, by the Treasury's procurement services for purchasing of supplies, by the Public Works Administration over public buildings and grounds, or by the Civil Service Commission over personnel policies. Some such authority would be needed in order to secure from the various agencies the co-operation which is always desirable in addition to simple compliance.

This centralization is necessary if the problems of distribution which we have been discussing are to be solved. The first proposed change would create one central agency for distribution of government publications. The work of that agency would be one hundredfold easier if it were located in the President's "family" rather than where it is now, in a competitive and frequently hostile branch of the Government. There would be less opposition to the first proposed change if the executive agencies were made aware, by the President's orders, that he desires the change.

Even more important this change could, if the responsible officials so decided, dissipate the present cloud of distrust which hangs over the whole practice of Federal publishing ac-

tivities. The executive agencies, including the Government Printing Office, could talk with each other as members of the same branch, responsible to the same boss, and could then present their common cause to the Legislature. Whatever the reason may be, it is a fact that more innovation, more adaptation to new social and technical conditions, has taken place in the executive agencies than in Congress or in its agencies, always with the tacit approval of financial support from Congress. Innovations in publishing, few as they are, have been inspired more often in executive agencies, it is our impression, than with regard to the printing ordered by Congress.

Another benefit of this particular change, assuming that the entire major change in law takes place, would be that the Joint Committee on Printing of the two legislative houses would no longer be solely responsible for any change. As long as printing is considered primarily a function of the Congress, the Joint Committee on Printing, as the agent of Congress, will be responsible for recommending or accepting changes that will keep the system abreast of the needs and the times. On the whole, the committee has failed to be alert and aggressive in trying to do this. On the contrary, it has been a routine arm of Congress, maintaining a penurious attitude toward the whole function of printing rather than an interest in seeing that the system is at its best.

This has come about because the function of Congress is not execution or administration but deliberation, review, and creation of policy. It is miscast as an editor and publisher. The Government Printing Office, if transferred to the Executive Branch, could, after appropriate discussion with the executive agencies, propose changes in legislation and enable the Congressional committee to fulfill its appropriate functions of deliberation and judgment. In other words, it could do what every other executive agency does as a routine matter, make proposals for changes in the law governing its programs. One

might say that the Public Printer could do as much now. He could, but the atmosphere is somewhat less favorable when an agency of Congress proposes changes than when an executive agency does so with the weight of the Executive Branch and the leadership of the President behind the proposal. In a sense the Public Printer is the agent of the Joint Committee on Printing. A wise agent does not prod his principals when they do not want to be prodded. Certainly under the present arrangement there is no evidence that the Joint Committee has the time or the facilities to analyze the publishing changes needed and to carry them out.

**SEPARATION OF THE FREE FROM THE SALES** Some publications should be given away in the public interest, while some should be sold because they serve more as private aids to individual readers than as instruments of public business. A new printing law should provide that the central agency to co-ordinate distribution be authorized to decide which publications are to be given away and which to be sold. In the normal practice of administration this decision would be made in consultation with the agency which has produced the publication. The decisions can be made for each individual publication or for categories. Probably the categories would be established, then the individual item checked to see that it actually falls within an indicated category. The important criterion should be whether the publication is in the public interest or of most benefit to individuals. For example, we venture to suggest that if the information will help citizens to decide on public policy or vitally to improve the community, let us say a report on atomic control, civil rights, or public health, it should be given away. Pamphlets giving directions for building a kitchen or making furniture from used lumber should be sold, on the ground that such advice is a benefit to certain individuals rather than a matter of public policy. No doubt under this

broad general rule of thumb, refined as it would be in practice to include specific subcategories, most Federal publications would still be for sale.

**A SYSTEM OF SALES AND GIFTS** Many of the free publications should be distributed zealously to any and all individuals and groups who will read them. The new co-ordinated system should allow such promotion, through mailing lists and through prompt attention to requests for copies. To avoid duplication, the distribution of free material should be co-ordinated, as should the sales, through some central office, although shipments might go out from any agency.

Publications listed for sale should be sold to all individuals alike, and there should be no free copies given to a privileged few. This means that individuals in clubs and classrooms, as well as other private individuals should pay the list price. The mere fact that they have shown a special interest in a subject should not entitle them to special favors. They would have to pay for pamphlets from other publishers, and there is some truth in the argument that readers respect a publication for which they must pay more than one which is given to them. The present system is unfair to the few who buy and is a needless bother to all concerned because it often means extra correspondence to get free copies.

**A RATIONALIZED DEPOSITORY SYSTEM** The need for a thorough examination of the depository system has been apparent for a long time. One recent recommendation for such a survey was made by Jerome K. Wilcox, in his August 1, 1947, report to the Public Printer, published in the September, 1947, *Monthly Catalog*, in which he says:

For many years there has been real need for a field survey of all Federal depository libraries. The chief object of the survey should be to find out whether this substantial gift of public documents to

libraries has been properly housed, has been kept in a systematic arrangement, and has been made generally available to the public without charge. It should further look into the question of whether these libraries actually need all the publications they have elected to receive. Such a field survey, undoubtedly, might result in a rewriting of the depository library statute. This office [of the Superintendent of Documents], by law, should make such checks periodically, but sufficient funds have never been provided for that purpose.

Mr. Wilcox, as chairman of the Public Documents Committee of the American Library Association, is a knowledgeable man in this field, probably the foremost authority in the country on the library handling of government publications.

No survey is needed, it seems to us, to show that the depository system as it now exists, still set up to meet the conditions of the early nineteenth century, is failing to satisfy the purpose which we assumed in the thesis of this report, namely, to provide citizens with information through government publications used in public libraries. Instead, this system discriminates against the wide use of government publications, because it gives publications to a selected few and bars free distribution to others unless they go to the trouble of writing to separate agencies or to their Congressmen for free copies.

The solution that seems most expeditious is to make all non-commercial libraries selective depositories, allowing them to choose by individual title any publication, whether printed or processed, and to receive free of charge as many copies as they want for ordinary library uses.

Such a solution would accomplish several ends. It would force the all-depositories to examine their lists and to avoid sending for items which are not wanted. In exceptional cases of all-depository libraries which actually want every available title, the normal good sense and amiability of the government administration should make it possible for them to obtain all

publications each month, although this permission should not be granted until a test period of selection by specific items has been tried, thus making libraries analyze their needs.

A careful field survey of the depositories would be a wise accompaniment to such a change.

The enforced selection by specific items from lists would mean that the burden would be thrown on libraries to select before they order. For libraries which do not want everything, this solution would allow them to choose only publications which they actually want and to choose them in sufficiently large numbers to provide for reference and for circulation and for branches as well as for main libraries. This does not assume that libraries could demand large enough quantities for use in study groups. For such purposes the publications could be sold, as another part of this comprehensive program, provided they were in the categories designated for sale rather than for free distribution in the public interest.

It does contemplate that all libraries, save those maintained in profit-making enterprises, such as industries and reporting services, should be recognized as outlets for the information that is contained in government publications. A clear distinction is to be made between libraries as institutions serving the citizen and the citizen as an individual. The institution should be encouraged to take free copies of government publications for the service of citizens. The citizen as an individual should receive free any publication that is pertinent in the formation of public policy, as suggested above, and should pay for any publication that serves primarily his individual interest. The flood of unrequested publications would, in any case, be stopped by the total and simultaneous changes which are here recommended.

There is danger, of course, that libraries would use even fewer government publications if they had to select them individually, or at best by classes, than they do under the present

system. Only experience could answer this question. We feel that as a calculated risk the chances are that much more use would be made of government publications if they were offered free to all libraries and requested by name, hence remembered and respected. The success of this new depository system, however, will depend upon the other changes proposed in this chapter.

**A MORE USEFUL CATALOGUING SYSTEM** Under even the best system of distribution, libraries, faced with the large volume of government output, will still need some help in choosing the publications they will want. There are involved two requisites for selection: logical categories in the catalogue announcing the publications and the provision of some helpful additional description. The first is the duty of the issuing agency; the second should probably be undertaken by libraries in a co-operative enterprise. Either practice could be adopted without the other, though preferably both should be provided.

The present scheme of announcing Federal publications, as we have said, treats them all alike in the *Monthly Catalog* and isolates those which the Superintendent of Documents thinks might be of general interest in the bi-weekly *Selected Publications*, the latter including titles in many various fields. State publications are listed by title and treated alike in *The Monthly Checklist of State Publications*, which is published by the Library of Congress. For publications in the field of world organization, including those issued by international agencies, the World Peace Foundation issues a comprehensive list in its quarterly *Documents of International Organizations*; *A Selected Bibliography* and a selected list, aimed more toward the general reader, in its quarterly *International Organization*. The second list is reprinted and distributed free by the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Library. With the possible exception of the *Selected Publications* of the Government Printing Office

and the bibliographies in *International Organization*, these lists do not help the typical librarian to know what the publications are like in terms of interest to readers.

Nine librarians in our sample advocated a single consolidated index, several of them proposing that this listing should be cumulative in the manner of the *Readers Guide*, or for that matter in the manner of the cumulative index formerly published by the Government Printing Office.

The new monthly catalog of U.S. publications is satisfactory in almost every way [says the reply from one librarian] and entirely adequate for current listings. The present system, however, that necessitates checking through seven or eight annual volumes of the *Monthly Catalog* is quite tiring. We hope this slack will soon be taken up by several cumulative volumes to include document classification numbers and material in and out of print, processed material and the like.

Librarians are of the opinion that they would be helped in their work if they could turn to one single source, whether cumulative or not, for the listings of Federal, state, and municipal publications. This catalogue would, of course, have to include all processed as well as all printed material.

Ideally, the Government Printing Office would eventually distribute also the publications which emanate from field offices of the various agencies. Significantly, not many observers have recognized the importance of publications of the field services. In Wilcox's report of August 1, 1947, he recommended that a list or index of field publications be made on a national basis, preferably through the medium of the *Monthly Catalog*.

One medium-size city library (50,000-100,000) likes the bi-weekly *Selected Publications* and orders from it "whenever we can find the time to do so," but still wishes there were a simpler way of obtaining documents.

The New York Public Library, which, as an interviewer

reported, prides itself on having the best collection of government documents in the Western Hemisphere, adds the interesting suggestion: "For libraries which do not wish everything, there should be published a daily mimeographed list, similar to that issued by the Stationery Office in London." And one wonders why not? Why not a series of daily lists by subjects and by degree of interest to various types of audiences?

Two other points are made in the general field of cataloguing. A few libraries would like to see the classification number assigned by the Superintendent of Documents printed on the document itself, and some would like to see the price of each publication printed in each publication. If the first suggestion were adopted, a document could be shelved immediately upon its arrival without waiting for its classification number to appear in the *Monthly Catalog*. The second would facilitate ordering additional copies of a publication by enabling a librarian to ascertain the price from the copy in hand rather than look it up in the catalogue.

Some relevant modifications of the single-catalogue idea have occurred to a few librarians, who have faced the condition that is overlooked by those who assume that a cumulative index will be the answer. They advocate a series of lists designed so that the library which wants only certain types of publications will be able to find them without plowing through the large catalogues. The catalogues and indexes, they say, are too formidable, and librarians, except in the large libraries, do not have the time to go through them carefully. Another comment is that the amount of information about the publications is too sketchy in the present catalogue to allow for discriminating selection.

Some description beyond the bare listing is needed. Even a typographical symbol beside the title in one of the present lists would help to show the general type of reader who might be

interested in the publication. For example, such large interest categories as these might be chosen:

*Popular; policy.* A publication easy to read, dealing with fact or argument on a matter of public policy.

*Popular; technical.* Easy for a layman to read, but reporting on some technical research such as how to fly or how to care for infants.

*Popular; self-help.* Easy to read, dealing with methods of making money, such as operating a small business or making furniture out of old boxes.

*Popular; economic.* Easy for a layman to read; economic reports dealing with general conditions, such as the cost of living or the housing problem.

*For technicians only.* Publications written by technicians for other technicians and not of interest to laymen.

*For special interests.* Publications such as economic reports for particular commodities or industries which will be of interest only to persons or firms concerned with the commodities or industries.

These six topics are merely suggestions. If it is too costly or too much trouble because of established routines to list publications under such categories, a symbol might be put beside each title to show its category; or a numeral could be used if the categories become too numerous. This is the sort of problem that can be solved best by librarians and editors.

**CRITICAL REVIEW FOR LIBRARIES** More important, it seems to us, is the creation of a central reviewing service for libraries, a service which could examine each publication and evaluate it according to various types of library interest. Such services are now provided to some extent. The American Library Association occasionally includes a government publication in its lists, and so does the *Publishers' Weekly*. The H. W. Wilson Company makes a business of listing new publications and also per-

forms an invaluable service in keeping a record of what is said in print, including pamphlets, as covered in *The Vertical File Service Catalog*. The Special Libraries group has sponsored articles in the *Wilson Bulletin* advising librarians where and how to get special items. Public Affairs Information Service provides an excellent index of everything published on public affairs, including many government titles.

All these services, it seems to us, try to do everything at once, and they do this well. But they have too broad a purpose to provide the kind of scrutiny which is sharpened by library needs. The kind of central reviewing service which we have in mind here would inspect the stream of government publications and would note some titles that would be of interest to the circulation desk in any library, some titles that would be of interest only for reference in the larger libraries, some that would hold a special regional interest, and some that need not tax the storage space of any general library.

This central reviewing service should be located wherever it can produce its reports with the greatest speed, perhaps in two places in the Federal Government: in the Office of the Superintendent of Documents for the *Monthly Catalog* and in the Library of Congress for *The Monthly Checklist of State Publications*. Probably there is no better place in the international scene for such a service than with the United Nations Library. Left to themselves, the international agencies are apparently growing up without central co-ordination and with little attention to the desperate troubles of distribution that lie inevitably ahead of them.

It is important that specialists with a grasp of the needs of libraries of various sizes and types be found to do the reviewing, for the significant contribution to be made by such an innovation would be selection for various needs. This function must serve to break away from the uniform conglomerate

treatment of all government publications, and it must serve all the needs of various libraries.

Conceivably, the reviewing agency might be developed as a revised form of the Documents Expediting Project, which is maintained by subscriptions by a few libraries and has already discovered and sent to its subscribers much valuable government material that otherwise would never have found its way to any library. The necessary revision of this project would include securing representation for all libraries rather than for the few which are now members, adding the function of selection to the present one of mere collecting and shipping batches of fugitive material, and enlarging the entire operation to provide the personnel needed to represent in Washington all libraries, taking into consideration their varied needs of selection and acquisition. A co-operative office in Washington, D.C., for all library needs, which would have established routine functions, such as those now performed by the Documents Expediting Project and would include a critical review of government publications, might prove to be a long-run economy.

The first task of a reviewing office might well be to prepare a basic list of government publications that would be of value to libraries which want to satisfy their general reader interest with policy information, a basic list of how-to-do publications, and basic lists of government publications in any number of other categories. Thus a library would be served with the definition of a backlog collection, taken from titles for which copies might still be available, and could try to stock them when it begins to order from the reviewer's current lists in the various categories.

The new book by Herbert S. Hirshberg and Carl H. Melinat, *Subject Guide to United States Government Publications* (American Library Association, Chicago, 1947) is a step in the right direction. These authors have selected titles be-

lied to be most generally useful in libraries and have arranged them by subject. Their book suggests what might be done on a long-term basis.

One important attitude must be a part of the approach of a reviewing office. Libraries must be thought of as outlets to citizens for government publications, and there must be no preoccupation solely with the reference use of documents. Unless the reviewers keep a special awareness of the popular distribution of those publications which contribute to the general information of citizens, they will fail in the task of helping libraries to know what kinds of publications are available, and their work will be helpful only to libraries in the larger cities where reference services can be offered.

**DISTRIBUTION THROUGH LIBRARIES** Finally, we should consider a way to make it easier for individual citizens to acquire government publications for use as single items or in lots for classes or adult discussion groups. This problem has concerned officials in the Federal Government for some time. In 1941 an interdepartmental committee recommended the sale of postcards by post offices, each card to be an order with the payment received by the postmaster on the spot. The Post Office refused, for the understandable reason that its job is to handle mail and it cannot take on miscellaneous work for other agencies.

Because it is, however, the Federal office most widely dispersed and used by more citizens than any other, the Post Office is frequently requested to take on odd jobs, even beyond its present service of posting civil service notices, criminals wanted, and publicity posters for various agencies. The idea of selling through the post offices is still alive, with the possibility of having lists displayed in post offices and converting the purchasers' cash into postal notes. Stamps would be easier to handle, of course, and some day the Post Office

Department may permit the Superintendent of Documents to accept stamps for conversion into cash, as the Superintendent would like to do. The reason for the present prohibition against the use of stamps, which has puzzled many a citizen, is not alone the extra bookkeeping but also the fear that if stamps are encouraged as negotiable currency the number of robberies of smaller post offices will increase.

The Superintendent of Documents has also proposed to set up sales offices in major cities, but has been turned down by Congress. "Our own sales office in Washington is now doing a business of \$190,000 each year," he testified in the hearing before a House subcommittee on the Legislative Branch appropriation bill for 1949.

We believe that the establishment of sales offices in other cities would much more than pay their own way and in addition would relieve us of the criticism which we now receive from persons in the Middle West and Far West. Also, we are continually urged by other Government departments to establish sales centers in the principal cities, and some agencies indicate that they would curtail their free distribution of publications if our office could make Government documents more readily available throughout the United States. Thus, it is our opinion that opening salesrooms in other cities would be good business from the standpoint of both profits and services rendered.

He requested an appropriation of \$25,195 for five employees at \$2,645 a year and five at \$2,394 a year to set up salesrooms in five major cities, but was refused the money. If the personnel had been provided, the idea was to get space rent free in existing Federal buildings, perhaps in post-office lobbies.

The ubiquitous Post Office and scattered salesrooms would be productive supplements to the present mail-order distribution of Federal publications, which, although increasing each year, still does not pay a very considerable portion of the cost of publication. These proposals are at best innovations for the

future. For the time being, mail-order sales seem to be the only method, until we find some new method involving neither the reluctant Post Office Department nor the necessity of appropriations from a Congress which is remarkably unbusiness-minded about this Government business.

The public library is the answer. It is an answer that is of necessity clearer in theory than in immediate practice, but there seem to be no insurmountable obstacles to using libraries as sales outlets. Librarians are not eager, to say the least, to become salesmen. Only 39 percent of those who answered the questionnaire for this study said they thought it would be desirable for them to act as agents to sell the actual publications, even if it were legally possible. This role for the library would imply the stocking of publications to be sold, either on a consignment basis or at the library's risk. Twenty-eight percent, oddly enough 10 percent fewer than those willing to act as a sales store, thought it would be desirable and practicable to act as agents to send in orders for publications to be paid for by the purchaser. Under this arrangement the library would act only as a catalogue office to receive money and send in orders; 33 percent said the present system of accounting and auditing to which their libraries were subject would allow them to act as sales agents.

The Superintendent of Documents is more than busy increasing his mail-order business, and with remarkable success. It is our clear impression from talking with him that he prefers to concentrate on this distribution and the effort to get field salesrooms and that he is still somewhat interested in persuading the Post Office to act as sales agent. At the same time, he would not close the door upon the use of libraries as sales outlets, though not as sales stores to receive publications on consignment, on the ground that the wastage from damaged publications would be greater than the gain in sales. The best summary of the attitude of the Superintendent of Documents

is that he doubts that libraries would be interested; he refuses to consider sending documents on consignment, and under the present law might not be able to do so; he is as eager as anyone to increase the use of publications through sales, but feels that the present striking increase in mail orders is as much as can be taken advantage of at this time with the facilities allowed by Congress.

Allowing for the qualification such reluctance imposes, we suggest the library as an obvious, but unused, channel for the sales of government publications, reluctant, perhaps, but also willing to talk. These are the advantages which it offers:

First, as we have said, it is in the main a governmental agency, supported by tax revenues. Although it is an agency of municipal government in most cases, the taxpayers who pay the bills are the same ones who pay for government publications, including those of international agencies, which do not exist on ideals, but on money appropriated by the member nations. The interest of citizens in being served by government is not confined to the jurisdictional lines of municipal, state, or national governments. It is probable that citizens think about such matters as jurisdiction much less than do executive officials. It is even conceivable that common-sense citizens would think it a waste of time to worry about jurisdiction and would say that since they pay the bill for all these different governmental units, they want them to work together in providing services.

Librarians may not think of themselves as operating governmental agencies, and the public's attitudes toward libraries may be distorted as a result, with a consequent loss of support, but they are nonetheless public agencies with regard to their source of income and their responsibility to the taxpayers, who support all government. Just as the local police work with the Federal agents, just as the local health authorities work with the Federal service, just as the state agricultural extension serv-

ices work with the Federal department, so the public library, in this conception, might work with the Federal Government and with international agencies of which the United States is a member, in the distribution of government publications to citizens.

Secondly, the public library is located near readers. The 7,408 public library systems plus the estimated 2,263 branches in cities of twenty-five thousand or more population, a total of 9,671 public library outlets, are closer to the homes and offices of more people than are any other handlers of publications save the magazine and pocket-book distributors. Government publications are unlike popular magazines and pocket books, so it is irrelevant to pursue this comparison. It is equally unnecessary to pursue the possibility that commercial book stores could as easily reach as many people. Few book merchants operate in cities of less than a hundred thousand population, except in special communities, near colleges or universities or resort towns. No book store cares about handling pamphlets; the profit is too small compared to the trouble of stocking them. Federal Government publications, offered at a 25 percent discount to book dealers, are less attractive than other stock, because the typical discount on trade books from commercial publishers is 40 percent.

Thirdly, the public library deals with the few people in our society who read consistently and can be expected to be the audience for information such as that offered in government publications. In this sense the library is a more efficient and more economical outlet for government publications than the Post Office would be. All kinds of people, the readers and the nonreaders, will go to a post office at some time, but they go there for other reasons than to read. People go to the library to read. Their minds are set for books, and the taste for reading is established. They form a selected audience in contrast to the audience of a post-office lobby. We have said

earlier that the people who read consistently and use the library most often are generally the same people who can be expected to lead public opinion. Such a self-chosen market is practically ideal for the sale and free distribution of government publications.

Fourthly, the public library is the one public institution in its community which has a staff especially trained to identify and order books, pamphlets, and other materials. The librarian is a specialist in finding pertinent titles among the millions of possibilities in print. A helpless citizen can get professional service from his public librarian in obtaining the publications he wants.

**EXAMPLES OF LIBRARY SALES** Two examples illustrate the possibilities of pamphlet sales through libraries. One is the Chicago Public Library and the other is the Department of State.

During the Second World War, partly at the suggestion of the Office of War Information, the Chicago Public Library opened a pamphlet sales service. It decided that government publications alone were not enough to serve readers; so it added the output of other publishers, such as the Foreign Policy Association, the United States Chamber of Commerce, the University of Chicago for its Round Table of the Air, and Northwestern University for its Radio Reviewing Stand. The initial capital of \$300 was borrowed from a revolving fund of the rental library, which is operated as a service of the Public Library, so that no appropriation was needed. This loan was repaid in a few months; and ever since that time the profit made from pamphlets bought at a discount has made up for any losses because of failure to sell all the pamphlets ordered, even though to get the 25 percent discount from the Government Printing Office the shop must order at least one hundred copies of each publication. The cost of rent and salaries is

borne by the library and is not charged specifically to the pamphlet service.

At first the shop was located on the first floor in one of the main lobbies. Customers could browse at the counter and could buy pamphlets as easily as they could buy magazines at the newsstand down the street. Later, partly for reasons of economy, the shop was moved to a back corner of the Adult Education Department on the fourth floor. The persistent customer now finds a display board in a main lobby advertising the shop on the fourth floor and another display board in the main reading room. If he can master the labyrinth of the Chicago Public Library building without losing himself forever in its corridors, he will find himself in the Adult Education Department, where he must inquire about the pamphlet service, because it is not visible as a shop at all. Even so, with all these handicaps, the service has sold 111,793 pamphlets for cash receipts of \$15,216.80 and has given away another 146,970 pamphlets. It has distributed a total of 258,763 pamphlets in a five-year period. And though treated like a skeleton in the cupboard, the service is still breaking even.

Much of its trade is with discussion groups. The librarian in charge of the sales service will prepare reading lists for any group large enough and serious enough to justify the effort. Pamphlets for the group are then sold. High school and college students are also a good market, and some trade comes from commercial book dealers who buy pamphlets from the library service to accommodate customers who ask for them. The book dealers were consulted before the library started its service. They said they would be happy to have the library sell pamphlets, for they never dealt in them except on occasion to accommodate some steady customer.

The Chicago service strives to satisfy popular interest. It assumes that the best way to educate people is to make their reading interesting. Thus, topics in the headlines are watched

closely as a basis for selecting pamphlets to place in stock. If there is a crisis in Berlin, the service tries to find a pamphlet on the military occupation of Berlin; if the Taft-Hartley Act is being debated, pamphlet discussions of it are ordered; if the question of annual wages is in the news, pamphlets on annual wages are sought. The librarian takes the initiative in learning what is available and ordering it. If she waited for the distributing machinery to work, she would lose valuable time while the news is current.

In the summer of 1948 the shop had about nine hundred titles available, of which some three hundred were Federal publications. Some examples of the government publications then available were: three on the control of atomic energy, two from the United States Government and one from the United Nations; the charter of United Nations; reports of the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress on Communism and Fascism in action; a House document called *Our American Government—284 Questions and Answers*; the summary report of the National Conference on prevention and control of juvenile delinquency; the GI round table series for education in the Army; and questions and answers on social security. During the war there was a big sale of the Smithsonian Institution pamphlets on battle areas.

In the Chicago example the library is the center of promotion; in the other example the library is only indirectly connected with the State Department's promotion. The Division of Publications of the Department of State has established a system of distribution through fifteen centers, in larger cities, which both give away and sell the department's publications. These centers are maintained by organizations and institutions, but the system is relevant to any scheme that might involve libraries. Some examples, taken at random from the fifteen, are the Woodrow Wilson Foundation in New York, the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, the World Affairs Council of

Northern California in San Francisco, the American Association for the United Nations in Seattle. These might as well have been public libraries so far as the nature of the scheme is concerned. Instead of libraries, organizations and institutions were chosen as centers because of their interest in foreign policy, and then displays of Department publications were sent to a number of libraries with a tie-in announcement that the publications were available at the distribution centers.

The centers are authorized to give away State Department publications to a wide audience of citizens who will make use of them, such as teachers, lecturers, reporters, or members of organizations which call meetings to discuss the particular subject of the publication. Regulations for this free distribution are set by the Department of State in Washington, D.C., and the various centers file periodic reports on the publications they have distributed under these regulations.

Nine of the fifteen centers sell as well as give away publications, and this arrangement is particularly relevant to the possible use of public libraries as outlets for all government publications. The Department of State supplies the center with copies from the number which the department has ordered for its own use. Thus, it can operate outside the laws which govern the Superintendent of Documents, who has to sell everything except those publications which go to depository libraries. In other words the department, from its own funds, orders enough copies to supply the centers for both free and sales distribution. If there is an undistributed surplus, the center sends it back to the department in Washington under Government frank, supplied by the department, and the surplus goes into free distribution elsewhere or into the stock of the Superintendent of Documents for sale. The department, not the center, takes the risk on all stocks.

Even more interesting as a guide to the future, the centers by special arrangement with the Superintendent of Docu-

ments receive the 25 percent book dealers' discount on all publications which they sell. The Superintendent of Documents offers two discounts, one of 25 percent on any order of a hundred or more copies of a publication and one for commercial book dealers of 25 percent on any order regardless of size. The discount provides some incentive to the centers to sell publications.

So far this system in operation is not as efficient as it sounds in description, but the defects are in procedure rather than in the basic concept. The Chicago Center, for one, has received unsolicited publications which were not in demand either for sale or for gift and has also suffered from undue delay in the delivery by the State Department of publications which were urgently needed. This has led to a recommendation for more discrimination by the State Department in its choice of what to send voluntarily to the centers and more speed in the delivery of publications which are wanted. It does seem clear that in any scheme of distributing pamphlets speed is essential, for the use of such material is so often determined by the topics that are currently being most discussed in the news and in study groups.

The detailed procedures by which public libraries could become outlets for government publications should be decided upon by mutual agreement between the various governmental agencies concerned and representatives of libraries of various sizes. Here we would only point out that the evidence indicates that it can be done if both sides are willing.

**A SUGGESTED LIBRARY-GOVERNMENT DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM**  
Assuming that such co-operation will be given and that the over-all changes we have recommended will be adopted, we can sketch out a possible future system. Libraries of any size will be provided for their own use with free copies of any government publication they request and will be given their own

representation in a central reviewing service. They will therefore be supplied with lists and indexes of government publications, as at present, and with an additional estimate of the interest category to which a publication belongs. Beyond this, they should have materials for display, for gifts, and for sales either by delivering from stock on hand or by taking orders for later delivery by mail.

The least that can be done in display is to provide extra copies of announcement lists to be posted, preferably on a bulletin board set aside especially for government publications. These announcements will represent municipal, state, Federal, and international publications. A note on how to get the publications, if no more than an instruction to inquire from the librarian at the desk, can be printed at small cost by the Government Printing Office. For that matter, the Federal Government might well donate a display board for this minimum effort.

If governments and libraries want to do more with displays of government publications, the field is limited only by the ingenuity of the specialists in such techniques. No doubt one requisite for more elaborate displays is that copies of the actual publications shall be placed on a rack for examination. Many of these display copies may be used later for reference or circulation, but initially they will be supplied primarily for display purposes in addition to the copies supplied for library uses. The publications will, as in the case of other library uses, be only those for which the library has made a request. If economy is to be served, the government agencies will rely upon librarians in their own localities to judge which titles will be of interest to their clients, aided of course by a more penetrating reviewing service at the source of publishing than is now available. Similarly, the librarians will accept the obligation to keep up to date on publications for display as well as for library use.

The display on the rack will be changed often. When special events are in the news, publications on them will be featured, even if they are brought back from past dates for display. If a library has a specialized clientele, it will choose for display those publications that may appeal most to their special interests. Any number of variations will be developed by imaginative librarians and government specialists, if the basic policy of library display is adopted.

The stocking of publications for gifts or for sale in any large number of libraries is probably out of the question for the present, although the idea should not be dismissed forever. The Chicago experience and the sale of State Department publications through centers may eventually be copied in other cities of one hundred thousand and larger, and even, perhaps, in smaller cities on a smaller scale. If it is good business to set up salesrooms in Federal buildings in the large cities, it may be better business to set up salesrooms in public libraries where the passing throng is a self-appointed, concentrated audience interested in reading. If the practice is ever adopted on a wide scale, its success will depend upon a spirit of enterprise and willingness to take risks, a combination of commercial skill with the eager concern of the educator.

More feasible under present circumstances is an arrangement in which the libraries become catalogue order offices for the governments. This can be started in a modest way at any time simply by supplying libraries with order blanks. A librarian then finds the title of the publication wanted, or suggests one from the current list, and instructs the purchaser about filling in the order blank and sending the cash, money order, or check. The procedure for getting publications by mail can be rather awe-inspiring to one unaccustomed to buying in that manner.

A much more serviceable scheme, and one which will undoubtedly sell more publications, makes it possible for the pur-

chaser to complete the transaction at the library desk. Thus, he is helped by the librarian to find the title he wants, by searching either back catalogues or the current announcements. He fills out an order blank, gives his money to the librarian, and in due course of time receives his pamphlet at his home address.

Behind the library desk, the following may be a possible arrangement for payment. Coupons in denominations as small as five cents, similar to those in use now by the Government Printing Office, will be issued to each participating library without prepayment. The publisher, and it will be principally the United States Government, Superintendent of Documents, will keep a record, of course, of the amount of money value of the coupons consigned to each library. When a sale is made at the library desk, the librarian sends with the order, coupons to cover the cost of the purchase, and deposits the cash in a special fund in the library. For ordering Federal publications franked envelopes should be supplied by the Government. Once a month, or as often as may seem desirable, the library will submit to the publisher a check or money order to cover all sales made and paid for at the time in coupons.

The coupons are not negotiable for anything save publications of a particular government, and it is not likely that they will ever compete with currency in attracting thieves. The Government, in other words, takes almost no risk in advancing to responsible professional agents the short-term credit on otherwise worthless coupons. At the same time, it can make it possible for a citizen to buy government publications by handing his cash to a person behind a counter, without having to get a money order or invest his own funds in coupons. This procedure calls for no more equipment than a drawer or a strongbox in which to keep the coupons and order blanks and a checking account, if the monthly payment to the govern-

ment is to be made by check instead of money order. No elaborate books are needed.

Even more economical are franked postcards, instead of coupons, each postcard to be an order blank. This saves the cost of coupons, order blanks, and envelopes. The cards can be printed in denominations, but it is much simpler to allow the librarian to insert the amount, if the publisher can and will trust the librarian to this extent. Postcards will simply be sold in libraries instead of post offices, as was proposed in 1941.

One advantage of these possible financial arrangements is that public libraries do not have to use appropriated money as working capital. The initial coupons or postcards are advanced by the government on credit, and all subsequent transactions are the simple exchange of coupons for publications and cash settlement later. No public funds supplied by the local library's supporters are involved. The various rules of local accounting and auditing are thus avoided.

In fairness, as well as out of commercial wisdom, the governments might grant a percentage on sales as a return to the library for its service as agent. The present 25 percent allowed by the Superintendent of Documents to book dealers seems the minimum, and preferably the usual commercial publishers' discount of 40 percent to dealers should be granted. This discount need not require elaborate paper work. The government could issue to each library, for example, 25 percent more in coupons than it expects to collect in cash from that library. For each \$1.25 worth of orders taken by the library, it would send \$1 to the government and keep 25 cents for its own use.

No doubt the usual "bugs" are to be worked out of this program, as they have to be worked out of any administrative program. One that can easily be foreseen is the refund of money when a publication that has been ordered is no longer available. The purchaser is entitled to a refund; the library

which acted as transmitting agent is entitled to a return on its account. The simplest solution, it seems, is to refund the amount in coupons to the library with the returned order unfilled, and let the library notify the purchaser to order something else or to pick up his refund. It is good business to bring the purchaser back into the library for his cash. Once there, he is more likely to purchase other publications in substitution for the one that is not available. (The large retail mail order houses make refunds by checks, written for as little as 1 cent, which may be used for the purchase of more goods or cashed at a retail store of the company or at a bank.)

This discussion of possible ways to display and sell government publications in libraries has been concerned almost entirely with selling. This is true because the program taken as a whole will, we believe, increase the volume of publications to be sold rather than of those to be given away and because the problem of sales direct to readers has never been satisfactorily solved.

Whatever system is adopted for sales can be used as well for the publications to be given away. In some rare cases, when a program that affects every citizen is under discussion, governments may want to send large quantities of pamphlets to be picked up by visitors to libraries, although to avoid losing the effect of such distribution it should be used so rarely as to make its occurrence conspicuous. More typically, the librarian will request a copy of a free publication for display, just as he requests a display copy of a publication for sale. Individual citizens or groups of citizens who want copies should demonstrate their interest by requesting them. The advantage of this system is that such citizens know they can go to the nearest public library to make their request and that the mails will bring the publications.

If these proposals sound drastic or utopian, depending on the viewpoint, it may be recalled that all new departures in gov-

ernmental administration had to start somewhere, usually against the opposition of all those who were accustomed to the *status quo*. Yet government does change its procedures. It introduced the parcel post and air mail; it devised the way to handle social security insurance; it made every grocery store an outlet for surplus farm products to be given to people on relief when it adopted a stamp plan as a substitute for the direct distribution of surplus food. Our favorite unsung hero in this sort of enterprise is George B. Armstrong, Assistant Postmaster at Chicago in 1864, an even earlier innovator. Developing a proposal made by W. A. Davis, a mail clerk, he doggedly promoted the sorting of mail on moving trains and during his lifetime established the railway mail service. He was opposed by many at the time, including the Chicago *Tribune* which snorted editorially that his proposal was foolhardy because letters would be blown out of the car and be strewn along the right of way.<sup>1</sup>

ECONOMY AND THE FUNCTION OF GOVERNMENT It is impossible, with the figures available, to make an accurate estimate of the difference in cost of publications under the present system and that under the system which is proposed here. Some rough evaluation might be based upon the outstanding differences, but the final result would come only from trial and experience. The number of copies of publications which are listed for sale, but mostly given away, would be reduced greatly under the proposed scheme. Much of the indiscriminate waste in distribution would be stopped. At the same time quite possibly the number of gifts to libraries of publications which would have wide reader interest would rise considerably. In all probability the additional cost of gifts to libraries

<sup>1</sup>This whole episode is an illustration of various aspects of difficult administrative change. It is told in Chapter XXVI of Stewart H. Holbrook, *The Story of American Railroads*, New York, Crown Publishers, 1947.

would be more than compensated for by the sale of many copies which under the present arrangement would be given away. Receipts from sales should rise to a much larger proportion of the cost of producing publications.

The probable money economy, however, is not as important in government as fulfilling the function of government. Government is not a profit-seeking enterprise and was never intended to be such. The primary reason for the publication of a government book or pamphlet should never be the return on sales, but its usefulness to readers. In this sense the primary purpose of a system of government distribution is to reach those citizens for whom the publications were intended, whether purchasers or not. We think of the public library, therefore, not as a sales agency so much as a distributing agency. Its function as an agency to help citizens get government publications would be primary; its function as a sales agency would be incidental. It would work as earnestly to give citizens publications in the public interest as to sell publications serving more private individual interests.

The United States Federal Government has dominated this entire discussion of government publications because it is by far the largest public publisher with which American libraries have to deal. We should say in closing that whatever arrangement is made between the Federal Government and public libraries should serve also as the basis for arrangements between libraries and the other producers of government publications—the states, the municipalities, and the international agencies. In the case of state and municipal publications, libraries will be mainly concerned only with those from their own governments. It matters little whether a publication comes from a state or an international body. A document requires distribution if it is worth publishing and if it is to serve its purpose. That purpose, we repeat, includes, in our

times, both popular and reference use. It should include the concept that the citizens who lead public opinion and are the users of libraries, need the facts available in government publications. As public agents, librarians, responsible for the process of communication in society, can be important ties between government information and citizen.



## APPENDIX A

### A NOTE ON METHOD AND SOURCES

THE INQUIRY SAMPLE is made up of sixty libraries, each studied by several social science techniques. It is a device which the Public Library Inquiry used to obtain a reasonably representative picture of selected library activities. These sixty libraries do not provide a statistically accurate cross-section of the 7,408 public libraries in the United States; but, having been consciously selected to exemplify variety of population, geographical location, and types of service, they do provide a comprehensive and representative range of library structure and experience. By studying these libraries from several points of view, through visits and questionnaires, the Inquiry could compare and cross-check its data.

Although every study adapted the sample to fit its needs, these sixty libraries constituted the basic list for all Inquiry projects employing the sampling method. They were selected in two groups. One group, called the basic sample, was made up of forty-seven libraries, which existed in the forty-three population areas selected by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan. These areas constituted a population cross-section accurately representative of the country as a whole, chosen to give a statistically reliable description of library use or non-use and attitudes regarding library services. The group of libraries in these areas consisted of thirty-nine city, town, and village libraries, four of which served the adjoining county also; four county libraries serving counties containing independent city libraries; and four county libraries giving the only library service. The second group of libraries, called the additional sample, consisted of eleven city, town, and village libraries and two county libraries. They were selected, upon the rating of three library experts, for their unusual

characteristics, namely, their development of extended services or generally good-to-excellent work.

The Inquiry sample, which is the common ground for all Inquiry projects, consists, therefore, of sixty libraries, varied enough in size, location and services to provide a comprehensive source for social science data.<sup>1</sup>

For this study of government publications the sample included the forty-seven libraries of the basic list plus eight which had at that time been chosen of the eleven selected libraries. Thus, the total sample provided fifty-five libraries. A questionnaire was sent to the fifty-five libraries, and replies were received from forty-seven. Of the eight libraries from which no reply was received, five made no use of government publications, as discovered by the field interviewers of the Inquiry. These field interviewers were gathering information on various topics of concern in the Inquiry as a whole, but they asked enough questions about the use of government publications to reveal any exceptional practices.

In some cases in the text, the full sample has not been used, but instead it has been stated that eight out of thirty libraries, for example, do certain things. This occurs when only part of the forty-seven, in this example thirty, answered some particular question.

One exception to this statement on the sample is the table on page 62, which shows the acquisition by libraries of twenty-six proved popular best sellers. The information on this point was gathered from all the libraries in the sample.

In order to avoid footnotes, I have in most cases mentioned in the text the book or article from which I have taken information. It may be useful here to add a general comment on books which will be helpful to anyone interested in this subject.

For the general discussion of communication and public policy, I know of no better one-volume book than John Dewey's *The Public and Its Problem* (Gateway, 1946). The general report of

<sup>1</sup>For a more thorough discussion of the sample and a list of the libraries and population areas studied, see the general report of the Inquiry, *The Public Library in the United States*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1949, Appendix A.

the Commission on Freedom of the Press, *A Free and Responsible Press* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1947) should also be read by anyone interested in communication in a democratic society. The various writings of Harold D. Lasswell in books and articles, plus many conversations with him, have contributed greatly to my own convictions on this point.

More specifically on the role of government in communication is the very thoughtful, readable, and altogether excellent two-volume work by Zechariah Chafee, Jr., written for the Commission on Freedom of the Press, and published as *Government and Mass Communications* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1947). In addition, my own *Government Publicity, Its Practice in Federal Administration* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1939) is relevant and has been influential in forming the present assumptions.

Federal publishing is discussed most recently and most revealingly in LeRoy Charles Merritt, *The United States Government As Publisher* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1943). Two earlier descriptions that still contain useful data are Laurence F. Schmeckebier's two studies, *The Government Printing Office, Its History, Activities and Organization* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1925) and *Government Publications and Their Use* (Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution, 1939). As in any study, many publications have contributed background for this report, but it seems adequate to mention only the most pertinent.

Equally significant were the talks with and the letters from specialists. These amiable Samaritans are absolved from any responsibility for the use I made of the information they gave me and for whatever error has entered my interpretation of it. They gave generously of their time and knowledge, and I thank them one and all.

In the course of preparing the report I talked with: Fred W. Cromwell, Superintendent of Documents, and his deputy, R. B. Eastin; Jerome K. Wilcox, chairman of the American Library Association's Committee on Public Documents and advisor to the Superintendent of Documents; Norris E. Drew, acting chief of the

Division of Publications, and Helen Lineberry of the Distribution Planning Office of that Division, U.S. Department of State; Walter B. Greenwood, then director of the Documents Expediting Project in the Library of Congress; Frederick L. Fridley, for twenty-nine years a member of the staff of the Joint Committee on Printing; Clara Jackson, who is in charge of the pamphlet shop of the Chicago Public Library; Harold Nadeau of the pamphlet shop of the Chicago Council of Foreign Relations; Waldo Chamberlin, then chief, and his assistant Isobel Wallace, of the Documents Division of the United Nations; Violet Cabeen, chief of the Acquisition Unit, associate librarian, and John W. Perry, Special Assistant, United Nations Library; Harriet Van Wyck, librarian of the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Library; Ruth Savord, librarian of the Council on Foreign Relations; Charles M. Mohrhardt, associate librarian, Mabel L. Conat, assistant librarian in charge of reference services, and Ruth Rutzen, assistant librarian in charge of home reading services, Detroit Public Library; Litta B. Bascom, documents librarian, Wisconsin State Historical Library; and Frances Mason, Reference Department of the Flint, Michigan, Public Library.

The following were helpful with letters or unpublished reports: Evelyn Huston, Supervising Documents Librarian, California State Library, who also described the California system for state documents in the *Library Journal* of January 1, 1948; Alice P. Hackett, head of the booklisting department of *Publishers' Weekly*; Donald C. Stone, then assistant director in charge of administrative management, U.S. Bureau of the Budget, who sent a list of all studies made by the Bureau of the Budget on Federal publishing and a copy of the report of the Interdepartmental Committee of 1941; and Allen D. Manvel, chief of the Governments Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census, who sent the summary information on municipal publications which appears as Appendix C.

Julia B. McCamy, as research assistant, helped in gathering and analyzing data for the report. As always, I am indebted to her for patience and extraordinary competence.

C. DeWitt Hardy improved the presentation by his able editing, and I thank him. Lois A. Murkland made the work easier by her

administrative help to staff members who were at a distance from headquarters. Most of all, my thanks are due to Robert D. Leigh, director of the Public Library Inquiry. He conceived the idea of such a study, and some of the suggestions, notably the selling of publications through libraries, came originally from him, to be tested by me and held sound.

APPENDIX B  
FEDERAL PUBLICATIONS



NUMBER OF TITLES BY SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION OF PUBLICATIONS  
LISTED IN THE *Monthly Catalog of Federal Publications*,  
JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, 1948

Subject	Number of Titles
Agriculture, general	8
Armed Services:	
Air forces	1
Army general orders	2
Army regulations	46
Navy	3
Aviation, general	52
Bids, specifications, and invitations	337
Campaign funds	239
Children and mothers	9
Coast Guard	13
Communications	1
Congress	4
Contract settlement	1
Economic analysis and reporting:	6
Agricultural commodities	65
Agriculture, general	12
Banking	14
Commerce, general	19
Construction	1
Co-operatives	1
Employment	17
Farm economy	16
Fish	8
Food	1
Forests	2
Government finance	38
Immigration	1

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of Titles</i>
Economic analysis and reporting— <i>Cont'd</i>	
Income	14
Industries	120
Investment	6
Labor	33
Land	1
Markets and transportation	33
Minerals	46
Petroleum	2
Postwar policy	4
Power	17
Prices	5
Production	4
Public assistance	1
Public works	1
Real estate	3
Retailing	3
Education	3
Eulogies	12
Espionage	1
Foreign policy:	
General	2
Atomic energy	4
Germany	3
International organization	2
Japan	2
Korea	1
Pan-American	1
Yemen	1
Handicrafts	16
Health:	
General	10
Cancer	1
Handicapped	5
Tuberculosis	4
Venereal disease	6
Highways	26
History	1
Housing	4
	6

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of Titles</i>
<b>Insurance:</b>	
Crop	2
Social	9
Intelligence	1
Investigations	1
<b>Legal actions:</b>	
Administrative legal decisions	84
Administrative regulations	78
Bills	6
Briefs and transcripts	153
Court decisions	164
Laws	27
Libraries	2
<b>Management:</b>	
Airports	1
Animal industry	1
Army	29
Automatic merchandising	1
Brick business	1
Co-operative	1
Farm	2
Foreign trade	4
Forests	2
Government	8
Home	4
Hospital	2
Industrial	4
Labor	7
Land	3
Mines	1
Motor trucks	1
Radio	1
Schools	1
Services	2
Ship	1
Small business	14
Wild life	15
National defense	106
Navigation	2
	50

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of Titles</i>
Patents and trademarks	8
Personnel	104
Post Office	2
Power	1
Prayers	1
Price Control, Office of	2
Prisons	1
Rare books	1
Recipes	1
Recreation	7
Safety	50
Seismology	3
Smithsonian Institution	3
Style Manual	1
Surplus property	18
Technical analysis and reporting:	
Agriculture:	
Bees	1
Blueberries	1
Cattle	8
Corn	1
Cotton	2
Dairy	2
Fats and oils	1
Fruit	1
General	7
Goats	1
Guayule	2
Hogs	1
Honey	1
Poultry	3
Rabbits	6
Rice	1
Tobacco	1
Vegetables	2
Aircraft	153
Alloys	1
Archaeology	1
Astronomy	1

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of Titles</i>
Technical analysis and reporting— <i>Cont'd</i>	
Birds	1
Chemicals	7
Construction	9
Ethnology	3
Farm processes	7
Fish	8
Forest products	30
Fungi	2
Geology	1
Glass	1
Industry	2
Insects	6
Mechanics	4
Medicine	18
Metals	1
Meteorology	11
Minerals	40
Nutrition	8
Paleontology	4
Paper	1
Pests	13
Plant diseases	2
Plastics	2
Radio	1
Rubber	1
Science, general	5
Soils	4
Teeth	1
Textiles	3
Water	1
Tennessee Valley	395
Territories	2
Topography	5
Translation	87
Transportation	1
Un-American activities	5
Vital statistics	2
Waterways	8
	10

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of Titles</i>
World War II:	
Bombing survey	6
History	8
War criminals trials	1
	15
Total	2,646
Catalogues, price lists, directories	148
Total all publications	2,794

## APPENDIX C

### STATE PUBLICATIONS

**TITLES BY SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION OF STATE PUBLICATIONS LISTED  
IN ONE MONTH OF *The Monthly Checklist of State Publications***

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of Titles</i>
Agriculture, general	4
Annual reports	90
Budgets	5
Catalogs	65
Conservation	7
Crime statistics	2
Economic analysis and reporting:	
Agriculture	8
Banking	9
Business	22
Labor	18
Minerals	2
Shipping	1
Wages	1
Education	61
Government administration	32
Handicapped	9
Health	4
Highways, general	22
History	2
Housing	12
Home economics	1
Legal actions:	
Administrative decisions	2
Administrative regulations	18
Court docket	1
Court decisions	11
Laws	39
Law reviews	6

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of Titles</i>
Legal actions— <i>Cont'd</i>	
Legal research	1
Legislative journals	8
Libraries	8
Manuals	30
Newspapers:	
Prison and hospital	4
School	5
Parks	2
Personnel	3
Planning	1
Population	1
Safety	10
Speeches on miscellaneous subjects	7
Taxes	1
Technical analysis and reporting:	
Agriculture	36
Biology	1
Engineering	4
Geography	1
Geology	11
Highways	3
Linguistics	1
Meteorology	1
Seismology	1
Veterans	1
Welfare	22
Wild life	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>565</b>

**APPENDIX D**  
**CITY PUBLICATIONS**  
**OF NINETY-TWO CITIES**

**SUBJECTS COVERED IN BASIC MUNICIPAL DOCUMENTS AND NUMBER OF CITIES OF MORE THAN 100,000 POPULATION REPORTING ON EACH**

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of Cities Reporting</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of Cities Reporting</i>
Administrative codes	1	Law	16
Airports	8	Licenses and permits	13
Art commissions	5	Liquor control	1
Bridges and ferries	9	Manuals	25
Budgets	84	Markets	7
Building and construction	43	Mayors' messages	18
Cemeteries	4	Motor equipment	8
Charters	83	Museums	7
City journals or proceedings	44	Ordinances	75
City planning	32	Parks	33
Colleges and universities	6	Pensions	38
Corrections	4	Pests	1
Courts	15	Police	46
Education	74	Ports	13
Elections	9	Power plants	1
Electric utilities	15	Property records	1
Employment bureaus	1	Public buildings	17
Finance	89	Public health	57
Fire protection	57	Public libraries	57
Gas utilities	9	Public personnel	38
General reports	29	Public safety	6
Hospitals	14	Public welfare	22
Housing	42	Public works	27
Insurance	1	Purchasing	12
Labor	1	Race problems	1
		Radio	1
		Recreation	26

Subject	Number of Cities Reporting	Subject	Number of Cities Reporting
Rent control	1	Traffic	13
Sanitation	36	Transportation	10
Sinking funds	18	Tunnels	1
Smoke control	4	Veterans	3
Street cleaning	5	Waterworks	53
Street lighting	16	Weights and measures	13
Streets and highways	25	Workmen's compensation	2
Taxes and assessments	24	Zoning	22

NUMBER OF TITLES LISTED IN MUNICIPAL PUBLICATIONS BY 92 CITIES OF OVER 100,000 POPULATION

City	Number of Titles	City	Number of Titles
Akron	22	Erie	12
Albany	26	Fall River	8
Atlanta	19	Flint	9
Baltimore	44	Fort Wayne	18
Birmingham	13	Fort Worth	6
Boston	66	Gary	15
Bridgeport	8	Grand Rapids	23
Buffalo	28	Hartford	12
Cambridge	7	Houston	13
Camden	7	Indianapolis	10
Canton	7	Jacksonville	14
Charlotte	11	Jersey City	7
Chattanooga	7	Kansas City, Kans.	10
Chicago	85	Kansas City, Mo.	20
Cincinnati	36	Knoxville	9
Cleveland	35	Long Beach	14
Columbus	47	Los Angeles	41
Dallas	15	Louisville	14
Dayton	11	Lowell	7
Denver	20	Memphis	11
Des Moines	16	Miami	12
Detroit	71	Milwaukee	28
District of Columbia	42	Minneapolis	22
Duluth	18	Nashville	9
Elizabeth	16	New Bedford	23

## CITY PUBLICATIONS

<i>City</i>	<i>Number of Titles</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Number of Titles</i>
New Haven	19	San Antonio	9
New Orleans	20	San Diego	20
New York City	155	San Francisco	35
Newark	19	Scranton	8
Norfolk	15	Seattle	24
Oakland	19	Somerville	29
Oklahoma City	7	South Bend	17
Omaha	11	Spokane	16
Paterson	7	Springfield, Mass.	40
Peoria	17	Syracuse	12
Philadelphia	34	Tacoma	15
Pittsburgh	28	Tampa	6
Portland	39	Toledo	24
Providence	35	Trenton	7
Reading	58	Tulsa	7
Richmond	40	Utica	6
Rochester	19	Wichita	14
Sacramento	14	Wilmington	17
St. Louis	46	Worcester	44
St. Paul	24	Yonkers	4
Salt Lake City	14	Youngstown	9
Total number of report titles			2,047

Source for both tables: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Government Division, July 6, 1948.

APPENDIX E  
PUBLICATIONS OF THE FOOD AND  
AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION AND  
THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCA-  
TIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND CULTURAL  
ORGANIZATION ON SALE IN UNITED  
NATIONS BOOKSTORE, LAKE  
SUCCESS, NEW YORK, JULY 20, 1948

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION

Report of the Second Session of the Conference (Copenhagen,  
September 2-13, 1946)  
The State of Food and Agriculture, 1947  
First Annual Report of Director General to FAO Conference  
Second Annual Report of Director General to FAO Conference  
Preservation of Grains in Storage (technical papers)  
The Work of FAO  
Soil Conservation—an International Study  
Report of the International Emergency Food Committee, March,  
1948  
Report of the International Timber Conference  
Unasylva (Illustrated magazine published for the Division of  
Forestry and Forest Products)  
World Food Survey, July, 1946  
Economic Review of Food and Agriculture (quarterly)  
Commodity Series (economic reports on wheat, livestock and  
meat, dairy products, poultry and eggs, vegetables and fruit,  
and rice)  
Five Technical Reports on Food and Agriculture, August, 1945  
(subjects covered: nutrition and food management, agricultural

production, fisheries, forestry and primary forest products, statistics)

World Fiber Survey, August, 1947

Agreement between United Nations and FAO

Breeding Livestock Adapted to Unfavorable Environments

Report of the FAO Mission for Greece

Report of the FAO Mission for Poland

Yearbook of Food and Agricultural Statistics, 1947

#### UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries (news of needs and offers to exchange, other world news of interest to librarians)

Conference for the Establishment of UNESCO—Preparatory Commission

General Conference, First Session

World Program of UNESCO

The Book of Needs I (report on needs in fifteen devastated countries in education, science, and culture)

Report of the Commission on Technical Needs in Press, Radio, Films

The Teacher and the Postwar Child in War-Devastated Countries

UNESCO Courier (newspaper covering activities of organization)

Agreement between United Nations and UNESCO

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The general report of the Inquiry, by its director.

Berelson, Bernard, *The Library's Public.*

Bryan, Alice I., *The Public Librarian.*

Garceau, Oliver, *The Public Library in the Political Process.*

McCamy, James L., *Government Publications for the Citizen.*

Miller, William, *The Book Industry.*

Waldron, Gloria, *The Information Film.*

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